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THE LONG LANE

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'A BASIL PLANT' 'MONSIEUR LOVE' ETC.

Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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THE LONG LANE.



CHAPTER I.

‘Marry, sir, I am helping you to mar what God made ;
a poor unhappy brother of yours, with idleness.’

As You Like It.

‘YES, sir, you will be very comfortable
at Lynion. It’s a small inn, but Mrs. Fall
is a nice woman, and will see you have
everything right. Yes, Mr. Nugent.’

So in the sad minor that belongs
to all Cornish folk, as through long at-
tuning to the sob of the sea, the wail
of the wind, spoke the landlady of the
inn at Carnwith, a small fishing village

on the Cornwall coast, to her one guest, a young man of about thirty-two, with a keen, handsome brown face and well-set figure, ready for a walking excursion of some length; knickerbocker suit, knapsack on back, and sketching tools under arm.

‘You’ve spoilt me, I’m afraid, Mrs. Blencowe,’ he returned, flinging away his cigarette end over the paling of the rough little terrace outside the house, and leaning on the rail thereof. ‘You don’t think we shall have rain?’

‘Rain? No, sir; I’m not much at weather-telling, but I don’t think it will rain awhile yet.’

Nugent looked out at the little cove, in which the village nestled against the

orchards and corn-fields running up the valley, behind the inn and score of cottages which made up the sum of Carnwith. Everything was clear in the sunlight of this first summer day—summer before its time, for the end of May was not yet. The dull red of the serpentine cliffs took a richer depth against the dazzle of the waves; the cottages built on the steep slope leading up by a winding path to the brow of the cliff stood out white or softer grey from the fields behind, whose green sky-line cut sharply the blue above, scarcely softened by the ragged row of trees, all levelled at the top, as by a knife, and bent towards the east; their strange stunting speaking, like the voices of the people, of stormy winds rush-

ing across the table-land from the wide Atlantic—a continual memory, even in softest summer, of bleakness and struggle.

There was no other hint to-day in the scene of anything but glad spring; over the grey-green of the distant headlands the long sweeps of sun and shadow chased each other, deepening and softening the forms of the coast; and the sea was clear as a new-washed beryl, with the light blown over it in drifting sheets of silver. Nugent was very much inclined to stay where he was, and give up his proposed tramp to Lunion, at least for to-day. But when a man is free to follow his own will, he has a certain shame in changing it; so, after a pause of indecision, he said—

‘I shall go. You’ll expect me when

you see me, Mrs. Blencowe ; some time to-morrow, I suppose.'

'Hadn't you best have a little lunch first, sir ?' put in his hostess nervously and suggestively. 'There's scarce a house between this and Lynion, and it's a matter of fourteen miles.'

'Thank you, it's not a bad idea, though I've hardly forgotten breakfast yet.'

Mrs. Blencowe was content with this half-permission, and in ten minutes Nugent was summoned to his repast, surprised to find how his appetite revived at the sight of lobster, cold sirloin, and the golden crescent of an omelette, brought in with the pride of a true artist by the hostess herself. She uncorked his bottle of Bass, and then, by the aid of knives, forks, and spoons, diverted from their rightful uses

to those of topography, endeavoured, in answer to his questions, to give him some idea of his way across the waste moorland which spread over the table-land between Carnwith and Lynion.

‘You’ll take the St. Osyth road, sir, at the top of the hill, till you come to a place where three paths start out so’—placing forks in illustration; ‘and when they separate again, so’—here two spoons were set at right angles to each other, and so on, till a winding array of table implements joined together stopped short at the edge of the table, leaving Nugent far more puzzled than before.

‘There, sir, you’re sure you see your way now, but whatever you do, don’t come back across the heath after dark, for fear of the old shafts.’

Nugent looked up a little startled. ‘I didn’t know there were any mines about here.’

‘No more there are; not that have been worked, as folk can tell of; but the old shafts, part of the country about Lynion, are thick as rabbit-holes, and it’s easy enough to stray, even for people who know the road. I never like to think how many may have met their death in the dark that way, and no one know of it till the judgment.’

Mrs. Blencowe was a pale, thin woman, with a melancholy, quiet face and eyes which always looked scared. Now, as her fancy called up the horror her monotonous voice told of, her gaze grew wide as with its vision—the confused straying across the black moors under the moonless sky, the

stumbling steps in the tall, tangled heather, the slip, and then the clutch and grasp for life at the edge of the shaft, or the sudden step over, and then the one shriek hurtling up through the silence and thick darkness of the pit.

‘I’ll take care,’ the young man answered after a short pause. ‘I suppose it’s all right by day. Well’—as he took his sketching-easel, folded up into the form of a staff—‘good-bye again.’

The way lay inland, up the valley, past the orchards, which were as one rough sea of rose-white foam, and the corn-fields, where the wheat was yet thin and green. Down below, from where a tiny stream laughed on its way to the sea, came the cry of a cuckoo from amongst trees, deep-boughed and thick with leaves, in

sharp contrast to their brethren on the hill-top, whose maimed life was the outcome of constant resistance to a power from which they had no shelter, and which had robbed them alike of beauty, joy, and use.

Yet even they would have been a relief in the landscape which faced Nugent, at the turn of the road, where it led across the moors. There was yet no hint of the purple glory of the heather mingled with paler hues, as delicate as those of a pearly shell, in the dry blossoms of last year, that had endured all the storms of the winter, and still rustled brown and dead on their stems, lending a livid tint to the heath, except where the gorse spread in a sheet of green and gold, as gorgeous as a Paul Veronese brocade. Here and there, in the

distance, could be seen a grey stone cottage or hut, but even these disappeared, and all around the young man was the wide moorland, so lonely, it would have been sad but for the blue gladness of the sky, the free salt breeze, the ecstasy of a mounting lark. As it was, the sun and air and shining sea, of which Nugent caught glimpses every now and then, exhilarated the senses, and his steps grew longer, his feeling of enjoyment keener, as the miles of heath spread between himself and Carnwith.

He had been in Cornwall more than three weeks, wandering as he would from place to place, and well content with the impulse which had led him to forsake town early in May for the purpose of a month's energetic sketching, an intention

which had been better fulfilled than such resolves on Nugent's part always were. Had he been poor, he might have done much as a painter; even now his work was that of an artist, his love of it too real not to make him a stern critic of its results; but the tyranny of a good income had fettered him, by depriving him of the wholesome and stern need of continual exertion, and by leaving him free to follow his own devices. The younger son of a banker, who dying had left his children well provided with this world's goods, Stephen Nugent, as a lad, had passed through school and college before he realised, through the pleasant crowding of such a boy's existence, that the attempt to arrest the beauty around him—the '*Verweile doch! Du bist so schön,*' of which

the painter's instinct is an eternal expression—might have been for him—as he thought, still might prove—at once life's truest work and deepest delight. But the cares of this world, or its pleasures, and the deceitfulness of riches had their usual effect, in preventing a habit of work, though not hindering more or less continued spurts of effort, which showed that, had Nugent not been encumbered by 2,000*l.* a year and the pleasant active idleness which would often appear the necessary consequence of such an income with a young man, he might have accomplished much that many men would have held well worth achieving.

Not, however, that it would have had much value in the eyes of his eldest brother, who, ensconced in their father's

chair in the bank, grumbled out that 'that confounded daubing had been Steve's ruin. If he'd gone into the army or the bar, now, he would have had something to think about; or if he'd taken the share in the bank, of which he had had the choice; but as it was, he'd never settle to anything, and when he wanted to marry, he wouldn't find his money go so far after all'—a natural conclusion from a man whose own income was steadily increasing, and who hoped to find himself on the right side of 20,000*l.* a year before he died.

Stephen held his own way, a pleasanter one than that of his elder brother, though not so directly profitable to himself. If now and then he had a rather dreary conviction that the best years of his life were drifting away in an aimless fashion,

he did not choose his brother George as confessor ; and as the vague, ardent hopes and impulses of boyhood faded farther and farther away into the past, and his manhood settled into the groove circumstances and himself had made for it, the more surely he felt the strength a definite aim would have given him, the more certainly he knew each year withdrew farther from him the possibility of such an aim. The ends which have value to an ambitious boy lose it to a man who has passed thirty, unless they have been steadily kept in view for years as his goal.

Somewhere after this manner were Nugent's meditations, as he followed the narrow footpath between the gorse and heather, with no change in the view for miles, till the sea, of which he had lost

sight, shone again in the distance against the soft willow tints of the slopes of the headlands, and the black and red and purple brown of their cliffs. He halted, the silent happiness of the scene filling his heart. The solitude was only broken by the speck of a ship on the horizon, and the sense of human life so far away did not break the spell. Nugent had met no single soul, all the way from Carnwith until now.

There was a figure in front of him, crossing the moor, but whether advancing in his direction, or following, as he was, the road to Lynion, Nugent could not for a few moments decide; it was so far off, too far yet for him to be sure if it were man or woman. Another minute and he saw it was a woman, drawing nearer to him, her

form thrown out darkly against the radiance of the sea and sky. He could not yet see if she were young or old, but her movement struck him; she came on swiftly, steadily, as blown by an even, resistless wind, borne on with that charm of free motion which is rare in Englishwomen. As she approached, Nugent saw she was young, a tall, slender figure, the grace of strength and beauty visible in form, as in gait; her simply made gown of rough, dark blue serge did not conceal how fine were the long lines of her figure, of throat and shoulder and arm, and then he found she was beautiful. It was like coming on some tall, wonderful flower in bloom among the sere heather, to meet her on this desolate moor; a girl of about twenty, clear-featured, level-browed, whose great

grey eyes looked out straight, neither proud nor abashed, glad nor sad, but with what was like fierceness in their unanswering gaze, as in the set curve of the beautiful lips and the head's poise on the rounded shaft of throat and neck. Something, as Nugent fancied, of untamed, unconscious maidenhood it was that gave forbiddingness to her fairness, a mute defiance, which withheld him from asking her if he were on the right road, with the instinct of human fellowship which comes to most men and women, meeting one another in a surrounding solitude, and prevented his even lifting his hat as she passed him, almost as unknowing of his presence.

Involuntarily he turned to watch her retreating figure, secure from her looking back. 'Queen and huntress chaste and

fair' echoed in his mind, but she was not regnant enough for Artemis. Her face, when she was close to him, meant, not calm, but unrest, fixed as the features were.

'Odd,' he reflected. 'How differently one sees things when one has nothing to do but look at them! If I had met with the face in a street, or theatre, or any crowd, I should just have said, "Very fine," and no more. As to beating my brain as to what her eyes mean, and what she is like——Never mind; I'll humour myself.'

Wherewith he sat down on one of the boulders with which the heath was strewn, and opened his sketch-book. He had a knack of catching the likeness of a face from memory, even if seen once only, and

he tried to set down this girl's, as it had flashed fully on him in passing.

As might have been expected, in the effort to recall the expression he produced what was almost a caricature. Yet it was like ; it brought her back so that he burst out laughing, when the tense mouth and the large eyes faced him, as if angry at being conjured up against their own will, and so defiant of Nugent's power over them.

‘She wouldn't be flattered,’ he thought. ‘I'll tear it up.’ He looked at it again, and the defiant gaze forbade him. ‘No, it will remind me. It's awfully bad, but no matter. What's done is done.’

CHAPTER II.

Fool. 'Oh nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out of door.—*King Lear.*

LYNION proved a delight to Nugent, being unlike any part of Cornwall he had yet seen, in its stern ruggedness; the great caves; the mingled tints of their roofs, shining and wet in the gleam of the torches kindled beneath them; the creamy softness of the stretches of sand left by the tide; the long line of each strong Atlantic roller, as it swept in; the sunlight striking through the curl of its crest, before it broke, then flashing and mingling in a crash, with the white of the foam. He wished he had

intended to make a longer stay. If, instead of these eternal sketches, one could paint a whole picture on the spot, it might be something like; but to think one could remember the drawing of those crags, with only these nine-inch splashes to remind one of the whole thing, was nonsense. At any rate, he should stay there two days. Mrs. Blencowe's prediction, that he would be made very comfortable at Lynion, was, he owned to himself, quite fulfilled; and the next morning he set forth to work pretty early—to find the tide high, and the sketch he had intended of the mouth of the cave impossible.

He turned up a steep path, leading along the cliff, with the world all before him, where to choose. The sea was rougher to-day, and the waves were foam-

ing and swirling, half in play, half in anger, against and among the rocks. Their sound and the sunlight were like the Sirens' song, bewitching into idleness, and Nugent had rambled two or three miles, his way diversified by the hills, where the cliff was broken into coves on the slopes of which cattle, as sure-footed as goats in their movements, were grazing here and there on such scanty herbage as they could find, when he came unexpectedly on beauty which made him hold his breath, by the surprise of its loveliness.

A little gully, up which the sea went rushing, splashing either side of the dark serpentine rock, thickly fringed with pink sea-thrift and green spleenwort. Down below, the thousand tints of the breaking

foam dazed into living white, while, spanning the rift of the cliffs, over the snow and the crystal green of the plunging waters, hung a foam-bow, sweet miracle of light and colour, born of the sun and air and sea, its silent radiance abiding, like a dream, above the noise and tumult of the seething water. The young man felt as in the presence of some enchantment; it seemed an abasing of such a perfect thing, to try to render it by those dull earths in the colour-box, yet he must make the attempt.

He sat and painted till the foam-bow died away and he scarcely realised he had seen it; but its memory was there on the block before him, and the rest of the sketch he could finish as well without its delight. As he mixed his colours, in the endeavour

to catch the odd hue of the sea-thrift, tender yet bright, his thoughts went back to the girl he had seen the day before, and whom, till now, he had almost forgotten. He wondered where she lived, for, except the tiny inn, the coastguards' cottages, and two or three scattered grey stone dwellings, half farms, half cottages, with their slated roofs almost touching the ground behind, he had not seen a single house near Lynion. The girl was a lady, surely, one who had perhaps lived all her life on this lonely coast, till something of its nature, its sternness and solitude and wildness, had passed into her. 'If it were so,' thought Nugent, 'what a strange life for a girl growing into a full and beautiful womanhood, if——'

He lifted up his eyes and saw her again

She was standing on the brow of the cliff, some way off, as though watching a cormorant, who was hanging over the waves in quest of food. Her face was turned from Nugent, but there was something desolate about that solitary form, with sky beyond and the waste moorland behind her, the waste waters below. Her hands were clasped in front of her; even at this distance Nugent could see the palms were bent outward, with that tight pressure of the interlaced fingers which usually tells of an answering tension of the mind within. He was glad she did not see him; he had a foolish, unreasoning feeling of intrusion on her, as if this place were hers by right. Would she turn round?

Something half-way down the cliff below her—gull's nest or strange flower,

perhaps—had caught her eye, and she leaned over to look at it; another minute, and she had let herself down over the edge and was descending towards it. Nugent was startled into sheer terror; he was a good cragsman himself, but the cliff was one he should have hesitated to attempt, and for a woman he would have deemed it madness. He watched the girl with the fascination of horror, but a moment or two showed him that, if rash, she was not foolhardy. He saw her step was sure, her judgment clear, and that her perfect fearlessness was her safety. None the less each flutter of her skirt, each feeling for hold of her foot, made him sick at heart.

He saw her, midway down the cliff, carefully balance herself, stoop and pick up something, what he could not tell,

and put it inside the loose bodice of her dress. Then she paused, as though doubtful whether to reascend, or find her way down to the foot of the cliff, where the tide was leaving a little strip of sand. She took the former course, and again the young man's breath came quickly, as the long slender arms reached upward to grasp some jutting point of rock, and the supple and alert form swung itself up from ledge to ledge, till at last the top was reached. A long sigh of relief came from Nugent's lips as she again stood above and, turning away where the moor sloped downwards, was lost to his sight. This last ~~glimpse~~ glimpse of her showed her head as bent over the treasure, whatever it was, after which she had clambered down, and which she now held in her hands.

Nugent could not return to his painting as calmly as before; every nerve of his body had thrilled with fear for this girl, and now, whenever he glanced up at the cliff, he seemed to see her clinging with white hands and wrists, holding tight to the rock; her head turned downward to find her next step below; the dark blue dress and the firmly, yet lightly planted feet.

He meant to inquire about her when he reached the inn, but did not, a little ashamed of his curiosity, a little unwilling perhaps to discover in this nymph of the shore some very mundane being after all.

The next day showed Lynion under a less enchanting aspect; a sea fog and a Scotch mist combined made May a delu-

sion, and the hostess's mildly dreary declaration, that 'when this sort of weather set in, it lasted nearly sure for a week at least,' did not tend to raise Nugent's spirits.

'Do you know where I can get a trap, to take me over to Carnwith?' he inquired, after a long morning spent in the fruitless hope that it might clear up, and the endeavour to peruse a beer-stained 'Western Mercury,' a week old.

Mrs. Fall looked hopelessly at him.

'No, sir, there's nothing nearer than St. Osyth, and you ought to have written there before last night's post. There's the omnibus that runs between here and there and catches the one to Carnwith, but that doesn't go till the day after to-morrow.'

Civilisation and railways have their

advantages ; this truth came home strongly on Nugent at that present moment.

‘What on earth shall I do?’ he muttered ; ‘I had meant to walk, but it’s such beastly weather. How could I have been such a fool as to leave my great-coat at Carnwith?’

Still, a fourteen miles tramp through the drizzle and soaked heather was preferable to an indefinite confinement to that stuffy little parlour, with its decorations of worked sampler above the mantelpiece, and two German lithographs, highly coloured, depicting the faithlessness of a young lady with an enormous chignon, turn-down collar, and very tight boots, to a youth in an astounding midshipman’s uniform, who after a tender parting, portrayed in the first print, returned in the

second to find his sweetheart hung with many bracelets, as the bride of a stout gentleman with a frilled shirt, and with mighty rivers of gold chain meandering across acres of white waistcoat. The intellectual resources of the Lynion hostelry were further represented by five books in a symmetrical pile on a side-table, the top one surmounted by a spiky lump of white coral; but when Nugent, having examined them, had rejected 'The Wide, Wide World' and Hoole's 'Tasso,' there only remained for his delectation an odd volume of Buffon, a cookery book, and the Sermons of John Wesley. His thoughts went fondly back to Carnwith; to the four or five small but precious volumes in his portmanteau; the goodly supply of daily and weekly papers, which he knew would

have arrived there for him by this day's post, and the store of fragrant birdseye left to abide his return. He had discovered, to his disgust, that he had nearly exhausted the little he had brought with him, and also that Lynion ideas of 'baccy began and ended with the strongest, blackest, and rankest shag—and this last fact decided him to start.

The heavy ground, sopping and slippery from persistent small rain, was not as pleasant walking as it had been the day before, but he turned up the collar of his light coat, and digging the iron spike of his folded easel with some energy into the ground with each stride, he struck up the path he had followed the yester morning, and which he knew led across to the road by which he had come from Carn-

with. He found the latter right enough, but just where it started, he fell in with a venerable personage, in charge of a flock of sheep, of whom for better assurance he made inquiries.

‘Aye, that’s one way,’ assented this worthy in a conceding tone, ‘but the other, yonder, is a deal better. It’ll save you two miles along here, and bring you out near a mile further on, on the Carnwith side.’

Advantages not to be despised. Nugent satisfied himself as to his friend’s reliability by one or two more questions, and took the path the old man advised, having rewarded him by a gratuity, acknowledged by a grim chuckle and the remark that ‘it would help to keep out the rheumatiz,’—Stephen presumed by means of a visit to the Lynion hostelry.

He himself was not disinclined to take a like precaution against the same malady, when, after having tramped three or four miles across the heath, he came on a tiny roadside inn, if indeed that could be called inn, where one small room with a brick floor 'served for kitchen, parlour and all.' None the less cheering, however, was the hot whisky-and-water, in front of the deep-chimneyed fire, even though Nugent could hear by the sound on the roof that the drizzle was turning into fast, heavy rain, and a low moan rising in the distance and growing into a louder sob, as it crossed over the moor, told him that the wind was getting up. It looked very much as if he were in for a storm, but that couldn't be helped now.

When he left the little inn, there were

angry streaks of sunset in the west, beyond Lynion, but the clouds were rolling up in sullen masses, gathering together from all parts of the sky. A lurid gleam from the sunset struck that part of the heath he had crossed, and athwart it the rain fell thick and fast. In front, the sky grew darker every moment, in spite of the heavy rain, and the clouds were driven faster and faster by the rising wind. Nugent pressed onward, in the hope that, before the worst came, he might find shelter, at the point where the Carnwith and Lynion roads met. An idea that he was rather a fool to have started grew into a conviction as the darkened sky was lit by the first glare of lightning, and the thunder burst over the moors, seeming to roll, in its after-mutter, across

the whole heaven. The storm-wind, after a lull, rose with a long sough, and then rushed fiercely from the north, bearing with it the driving rain, and closing in the whole day in an early darkness. Nugent fought on against it, the flashes of the lightning showing him from time to time that the path still lay before him ; but he failed to notice that he had passed a point where two roads met, one branching north, and the other north-west, and had taken the latter.

The storm showed no sign of abating, and the young man rather enjoyed it. With the cheerful certainty of a good fire and supper awaiting him at Carnwith, the weird loneliness of the moor had a fascination in its dreariness, as the lightning from time to time flashed it into view,

showing the blankness around. It had grown quite dark; night had fallen with the storm, and Nugent had but a very vague idea as to how far he had progressed on his way.

With difficulty, and crouching under the prickly shelter of the whins, he managed to light his pipe, and kept on in the teeth of the wind, head bent down and shoulders squared. A sudden gust took his hat, snapping its guard, and carried it he could not tell whither; he would have given it up for lost, had not two quick flashes, one following the other, shown it caught on a furze bush a little distance off. He made the best of his way towards it, feeling rather proud as he recaptured the errant headgear and jammed it tightly on, holding it down by his hand, as another

gust, more violent than the first, made him twist round for a few moments, to prevent himself being blown off his legs. Then he turned, as he thought, back to the path—and could not find it in that thick tangle of heather.

The lightning had ceased for the while, though the wind and rain were more violent than ever. It didn't signify, he should find the track in a minute; but the minute grew into a very long one, and the prospect of a night's wandering about the moor, chilled as he was to the bone, grew disagreeable and probable. Perhaps it might clear up later, and the moon would come out; but, as the wind and rain beat ever more furiously against him, and a fresh glare of lightning revealed no trace of the path, Nugent was fain to confess

that such a hope was sanguine enough to do credit to Mark Tapley himself. As he stumbled against a block of granite, one of the many bestrewing the moor, the memory of the old shafts of which Mrs. Blencowe had warned him flashed back on him. He was no coward, but one quick shudder passed through him, and then came thankfulness. He could not tell how near he had been to such a peril, but he was safe enough now. Even if he chose to accept the worst of his position, he had but to stay where he was till the daybreak ; but that would be uncomfortable, and he did not feel inclined to bow so far to the force of circumstances. He determined to make one more effort to find the path ; so, feeling carefully before him with his staff, he groped onward, till at last he discovered,

if not the road, at all events a footway. It was very narrow, a sheep-track probably, but even a sheep-track was not likely to end at the mouth of a shaft, and Nugent sped on rejoicing, taking very good care not to stray from the path he had found, and caring little whither it led him, in the comfortable certainty it must lead somewhere.

CHAPTER III.

Verily

You shall not go, a lady's verily is

As potent as a lord's.—*The Winter's Tale.*

IT did lead somewhere—surely that was the distant glimmer of a light through the thickness of the rain. Nugent began to realise how blessed a relief would be the assurance of a roof over his head that night. He had always fancied he was accustomed to roughing it, but this was a 'demned damp, moist, unpleasant fashion of roughing it,' besides being a lonely one. From wherever that welcome light shone—cottage, farmhouse, or inn—he had little doubt of finding there a lodging for the

night, if not a vehicle to carry him to Carnwith. A very short stay in the West Country suffices to beget a well-founded trust in the hospitality of its children, and Nugent's pace quickened in the direction of the faint gleam which, as he neared it, grew steadier and wider, into the square radiance of a lighted window.

It was not till he was quite close, that the lightning showed him for an instant a house of some size, and, as he thought, a distant background of tossing sea, lit into blue by the flash's lurid glare. Feeling his way in the renewed darkness, by the post of the stone fence in front, he groped up what might be a garden, with a dim, gusty sense, more than sight, of blowing tamarisks about him, bent almost level by the

blast ; but as he gained the house, the light streaming through the window guided him to the door, in friendly fashion. The knocker was stiff, as from disuse, but his urgent appeal to its resources was answered, and the door opened, at last, showing a long wide passage ; a winding staircase, in dim perspective ; and a tall, grim woman with the weather-beaten look of early age, which comes to most of the countrywomen of those parts, for all the soft southern grace of their childhood.

He could not tell if she were farmer's wife, or servant, but her startled stare at him was scarcely promising ; she admitted him, however, and would have shut the door, had not the wind forestalled her in that office. Otherwise a parley would have

been impossible, in the noise and rush of sound.

In as few words as he could use, Nugent explained his plight—then paused, to see if shelter or assistance, even in the way of guidance, would be offered him. The woman surveyed him with a long and rather suspicious gaze ; but, as he was about to ask more frankly for help, she said—

‘I’d better ask, I suppose ; wait a moment, sir.’

With which she opened a door, from the room beyond which streamed forth a glad warm radiance, and entering within, she shut the door again, leaving Nugent in the long passage, dimly illumined by one small lamp. He was growing impatient, when the door reopened and the woman reappeared.

‘Will you step in, sir, and see Mrs. Ross?’

So, she was not mistress. Nugent entered the room, but his eyes were so dazed by the long darkness, that for the first moment he could only distinguish the warmth of the fire and candle-light, the glow of dark red drapery on wall and table, the air of home-comfort and of women’s presence. Then he knew that a sheep-dog couched on the hearth was barking furiously at him, and was only stilled by two words from a low contralto voice, and he saw a lady, no longer young; faded and delicate, with a sweet, worn face, rising to greet him. Beyond her was another woman’s form, bent over some papers, as though she were writing, at a table against the drawn curtains of the further window,

and only recognising his entrance by a momentary lifting of the head—the girl he had met on the heath.

The older lady would fain have greeted him stiffly, but the sight of his dripping condition melted her frigid politeness. ‘Oh dear,’ she exclaimed, ‘you are wet through; you will catch your death of cold.’

Nugent laughed a little constrainedly; the sense of intrusion he had so unreasonably experienced yesterday, while watching the girl who now sat before him, bending over her writing, as though unconscious of his presence, returned in greater force. If he had meant to ask for shelter, the intention entirely deserted him now.

‘Not so bad as that,’ he answered, ‘but I am really ashamed of troubling you; if

you would kindly lend me a lantern and could give me any idea of my best way to the nearest inn, I shall only be too grateful.'

'But I couldn't think of such a thing,' responded Mrs. Ross with energy. 'There is nothing nearer than Lynion—and the old mines—' so, thought Nugent, his danger had not been all fancy—'and such a night. Of course you must stay here; but your wet clothes—oh dear!'—she paused, and the young man thinking she was meditating over the impossibility of a feminine wardrobe supplying his needs, made haste to answer—

'Indeed I am all right—if there is any way of getting to Lynion,' he added with a hesitating, perhaps half-deprecating glance at the girl, who still sat as unheed-

ing their words. She looked up now and spoke briefly :

‘It wouldn’t be safe,’ the tone was brusque, if not ungracious, albeit the voice—that which had quieted the dog—was full and round.

‘No,’ said Mrs. Ross, as gathering decision from her companion’s words, ‘of course not ; but you are so wet—’ she glanced hopelessly at his soaked and dripping condition, with a bewilderment that amused Nugent, as did her relief at the girl’s suggestion, indifferent but helpful :

‘Joshua—’

‘Yes ; that will do, if you don’t mind, Mr.——’

‘My name is Nugent,’ put in her involuntary guest.

‘Thank you, Mr. Nugent. Joshua is

Ruth's — our servant — husband. He works for us, and sleeps in the house ; and if you wouldn't mind his things——'

'I should be only too grateful,' said Stephen, who had no greater love than most of his kind for the after-chilliness of wet raiment.

Still he felt rather shy of presenting himself before his hostesses, after he had been led along a flagged passage by Ruth, into a wide low kitchen, the willow, buff-coloured walls whereof were pleasant in the firelight—and she had introduced him to Joshua, bidding her husband to 'do his best for the gentleman.' This best proved to be a choice between Joshua's Sunday suit, fearfully and wonderfully made, an old pea jacket, smelling villainously of stale tobacco, a pair of serge trousers

and a rough blue jersey, cheerfully adorned with a large scarlet anchor on the breast. Nugent decided on the two latter garments, wishing heartily he could have remained in his own clothes, or, failing that, could have stayed in the kitchen and been spared inflicting himself on Mrs. Ross and the girl, who he supposed was her daughter, feeling such a fool as he did, in his present attire. Yet the close-fitting indigo vest, with its touch of bright red, was no unpicturesque setting to the young man's dark, handsome head, with its pallor of subdued yet deep-tinted colouring; only unfortunately Nugent did not see it in this light, and would have given a great deal for an ordinary suit of clothes.

Something of adventure stirred in his

blood, as he meditated on the chance which had thrown him once more against this girl, who had shown no sign of recognition ; whose silence and coldness were as an icy rebuff to any inward wonder about her.

‘ Supper is ready in the parlour, sir, said Ruth, as the young man descended the winding staircase which led down to the kitchen, from Joshua’s fastnesses above—and so he returned to the room where his hostesses awaited him.

CHAPTER IV.

Her lovely eyes maintain
Their pure unwavering deep disdain.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE parlour was very pleasant to his eyes, with the white cloth spread ready for supper. Mrs. Ross was standing by the fire, one foot on the brass fender, and one hand steadying her by its hold on the slender shelf of the carved wooden mantelpiece. The girl stood by the table intent on making a salad; shaking the lettuce, to free it from moisture, in a white napkin, the corners of which were gathered up closely in one hand. A strength in the steady, slight rise and fall of the arm gave

Nugent, already keenly alive to impressions of her, the suggestion of energy half unconsciously striving to find an outlet in all ways it could. Again he made his apology for his intrusion, and would have spoken his sense of their kindness, but Mrs. Ross stopped him.

‘Please don’t say any more; we are only too glad you found your way here, but you must tell us presently how you lost it.—Honor dear, are you ready?’

‘The salad is : will you come?’

She looked at Nugent as she spoke, but without any change of her set, indifferent expression. He could not say she was rude, neither was she shy: *farouche* suited her better. She appeared not to take the least interest in Mrs. Ross’s inquiries as to Nugent’s adventures, nor in his

answers thereto. Yet she was hospitable in deed, if not in word; silently passing him whatever he might chance to need. The supper-table was well spread, and Nugent half suspected that the two or three substantials that adorned it, did so chiefly on his account; his idea of a woman's evening meal, in the absence of the other sex, being tea and an egg. If it were so, he was grateful to his entertainers for having provided for his more masculine appetite, which was sharpened by his tussle with the weather and the long hours that had elapsed since his early dinner at Lunion. Simply as the table was laid, its appointments had the daintiness of a long habit of refinement; and the room, too, was unlike anything he would have expected to find in the midst of that desolate heath

—as unlike as were its occupants. The panelled walls, painted of a delicate ochre tint, were such as are to be found in most of the better class of West Country farmhouses, out of the way of railroads and the upholsterer of the nearest town, as were the heavy mahogany chairs and tables of the Georgian period, bright with hard polish, and a tall bureau, with china cupboard above; the quaintly set glass doors of which, however, only screened books. But low shelves running round the room held more books; the wide ledge of the window, outside which the rain still lashed the panes furiously, was full of ferns and the sweetness of jonquils; and on the wall opposite Nugent, above Honor's head, there leaned forth, from a large photograph the tender womanliness of the Gran

Duca Madonna, its beauty contrasting with that of the living face beneath, almost as if opposed to it. The girl's silence seemed to make Mrs. Ross nervous; the remarks she addressed to her had a deprecating sound, but though Honor only answered by 'yes' or 'no,' her voice was sweet, and once, Nugent fancied, her eyes were lifted to the elder woman's, and a quick answering smile made her mouth lovely; the rather full, but not thick mouth—set like a blossom in the proud delicate face.

She helped Ruth to clear the table, moving about with a free, noiseless gait that bewitched Nugent's eyes, as Mrs. Ross asked him to turn his chair to the fire, saying she was sure he couldn't be warm yet. The sense of restrained power gave the girl's actions a singular charm, as

when seeing Ruth attempting to lift a too fully laden tray, she moved her aside and took it herself. Nugent sprang up.

‘Let me,’ he said, an odd beseeching in his voice. She looked round, as startled to find him so near, but kept firm hold of her burden, as if a man’s proffered help were a strange thing.

‘No, thank you,’ she answered, but he did not think her eyes hard at that moment—were they sad? He did not venture to press the point; she left the room, carrying the tray, followed by Ruth. Nugent listened to hear Honor’s step returning to the parlour, but she did not come back at once. Mrs. Ross’s voice roused him.

‘Shall you stay much longer in Cornwall?’

‘Two or three weeks. I have enjoyed my time down here so much, I am loth to leave.’

‘In spite of your to-night’s adventures?’

‘They have ended so pleasantly,’ said Nugent, his ear still alert for a step outside, and the opening of the door that should admit that tall, lissom form.

‘Thank you,’ answered Mrs. Ross, with pretty, half-humorous courtesy. ‘I might return the compliment, even though we are such desert islanders here, that any forms of politeness take great importance, and we are chary of them.’

‘This is a lonely part of the coast.’

‘It could not well be lonelier. Lynion is the nearest village, and Polmouth and the railway are quite twenty miles from here. There are two or three small farms

near us, from which we get what we want, but we are quite out of the beaten track, and of the way of——’

‘Of tourists?’

‘Yes; there is no special point of the scenery about here which they feel bound to visit; and if there were, there is nowhere where they could put up.’

‘You must be thankful’—inwardly hoping she did not class him with the crowd.

‘Yes, indeed,’ said Mrs. Ross simply, and evidently unconscious of her guest’s possibly fitting the cap on his own head. ‘Of course, in the summer and autumn, people do pass, especially painters, and one comes across them on the moors. One young man set up his easel just in front of this house last summer, to paint the sunset,

and Ruth was so indignant, she went out and drove him away.'

'How?'

'Oh, her tongue is a mighty weapon.'

Nugent laughed. 'You make me rather ashamed of my sketching-box and my wanderings.'

'Are you an artist—do you paint?'

'After a fashion; but I can't call myself an artist, hardly a worker—I wish I could. I was wondering yesterday at Lyonion——' The door opened and Honor entered, went straight to the table where she had been sitting before supper, drew her papers towards her, and was again apparently absorbed in them. For a moment he paused, as forgetting his thought.

'What were you wondering?' asked Mrs. Ross.

‘Whether’—the vague idea, as he spoke, crystallising into a fixed intention—‘I couldn’t try at something rather less bad than my usual efforts, if I stayed at Lynion and painted the whole picture face to face with the scene itself, and I made up my mind to try.’ He did not look at the girl as he spoke, but he was conscious through his whole being, that this announcement of his neighbourhood, for the next few weeks, would be distasteful to her, and he felt himself in the wrong. Still, why should he? They need never meet—certainly, with her gift of silence, if they did meet, need never speak.

‘I should think it would be a good plan,’ said Mrs. Ross. ‘But I know so little about painting. Have you any sketches with you?’

This kind of display Nugent hated, but he could not be ungracious, and was fain to unfasten his box. He saw soon, however, that his companion had not asked merely from politeness, and that she had a real, if not very critical, enjoyment of his work. When she came on the foam-bow sketch, with the lovely misty radiance of the many-hued arch brooding over the white foam, with its sunstruck gleam, a cry of pleasure escaped her. 'Oh, Honor!' she exclaimed; 'come and look.'

The girl, thus summoned, rose and went to her shoulder. Her look softened, as though a beauty, akin to that the sketch reflected, had been a delight to her also, and her face itself recalled the light of the foam-bow on the wave. 'It is beautiful,' she said quietly.

‘I have not seen one of those bows for a long time,’ said Mrs. Ross, her eyes dwelling on the sketch, as with regretful fondness.

‘Will you keep the remembrance of this one?’ asked Nugent. The sketch was accepted with some protests, but with evident pleasure, by his hostess. Honor said no more, but returned to her seat. He wondered what her occupation was, for her even brows were slightly drawn down, as though in the effort to concentrate her attention on what was before her. Certainly such a lonely life as that of which Mrs. Ross’s words had given him a glimpse, did not in this girl’s case tend to charm of manner. Yet he knew she was not stupid, and the books round the room spoke to no want of mental culture.

Ten o'clock struck, and, with a cordial 'good night' from Mrs. Ross and a reserved one from Honor, he was shown up by Ruth to his bedroom. He was vexed with himself for being so haunted by the girl. If she had not been beautiful, he would simply have considered her brusque and disagreeable; but when a woman has such full-lidded eyes, shining like subdued jewels; such waves of brown hair knotted into so heavy a plait behind her small ears; so beautiful an up-bearing line of neck and throat, sweeping up to the pure profile it supports—then, round her 'sweet thoughts will crowd as bees about their queen,' no matter if the lovely lips only utter brief monosyllables, and the long eyes look a steady defiance to any overtures, even of common courtesy. The

meanings they might express are suggested, even more strongly because they show no sign thereof, as a blank canvas is always fuller of possibilities than a finished picture.

CHAPTER V.

Is there a voice coming up, the voice of the deep from the
strand ;

One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering
red ?

Love that is born of the deep, coming up with the sun from
the sea ;

Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall
have fled ?

TENNYSON (*Becket*).

THE storm was dying away when Stephen went up to bed, and he could hear through the fainter cry of the wind the far-off thud and long-drawn moan of the sea. He woke with it in his ears the next morning ; but it was only a murmur now, and the sun shone in brightly through the diamond-paned window, its lustre seeming the clearer after the tempestuous night.

This window looked out over the back of the house, which he now saw stood not far from a headland, so that from the window on all sides there spread the flashing laughter of the sea.

What a place to build a dwelling-place in, and to live in through winter and summer! There was no tree to be seen; only a rough farm-building or two, apparently disused, and a loose stone fence with a row of gnarled tamarisk bushes; beyond them moor and crag, sea and sky.

His own clothes were ready for him. albeit there was still a prevailing suspicion of damp about them in spite of three hours' vigorous drying before a roaring kitchen fire. When dressed he loitered to the window, wondering what the time was — for his watch had stopped — when he

saw Honor coming across the moor towards the house. She had been bathing, for her hair was down, falling below her waist as the light wind's touch brought back its wave and colour; and, as she drew nearer, Nugent, screened from sight by the curtain, saw she carried an open straw bag, the sides stuffed out by the rolled-up dark blue garment therein. She was not like the woman he had seen the night before, now, with her step glad as a girl's could be, her hair loose and shining, and her face bright, as, in answer to her whistle and call, her dog Dan came springing along the heath after her, his coat also telling of his morning's swim. Nugent heard her laugh as the dog insisted on a game, and it was as a new revelation of her to his heart. After all she was but

a girl, with a girl's waywardness and pride, a girl's gladness and fearlessness—surely with a girl's sweetness as well.

He went downstairs and found her just coming along the passage. He feared lest her softer mood would vanish at his appearance. It might have done so, but just as they greeted she had to try and prevent Dan, who bounded up to them, from overpowering Stephen with effusive politeness. 'Down, Dan, down!—I let him spring on me,' she exclaimed, 'and so he gets into the habit.'

'But I like it,' said Nugent. 'Here, Dan!'

'No, he mustn't do it with other people, because then he might with sheep.' The comparison was not flattering, and Nugent could not help laughing. For a

moment Honor looked puzzled ; then there came a sweet echo of his laugh—very slight, but it broke the ice. ‘I did not mean to be rude,’ she said ; ‘but he was never properly trained, and I always have to prevent him rushing after them on the slopes.’

She was grave again now, and Nugent asked, ‘Will Mrs. Ross be down soon ? I should like to thank her for her kindness and say good-bye before I start.’

‘You must not go before breakfast ; my aunt’—Nugent had discovered the relation between the two women the evening before—‘would be so vexed : she very seldom sees anyone but me and Ruth, and she has enjoyed your visit so much.’

The words seemed a tacit apology for her ungraciousness the night before ; but

she evidently had no personal feeling that made her urge him to stay; rather did she put away her own wishes, in favour of her aunt's liking the little stir and excitement of even a stranger's advent. Nugent saw this, and knew that the change in her manner by no means indicated a change in her mind towards him. He hardly realised to himself how strong was his heart's wish that it did.

‘It is very kind of her, and of you to say so,’ he began lamely, and feeling horribly untactful, ‘but I am ashamed already of having trespassed so long on you.’

‘How could you help it?’ she asked brusquely. ‘If you hadn't been here, you must have wandered about the moor all night, unless you had fallen down one of the old shafts, or over the cliff.’

‘I had better fortune.’

‘I don’t know,’ the girl answered. Sometimes I think that kind of death, with no time to think or see it, would be good.’ The words came strangely from the young lips, but it was their tone struck Nugent. There was no affectation in it, no ‘being as sad as night only for wantonness,’ but a reality which seemed to empty the world of the delight of youth and strength and hope. The young man remembered with what horror Mrs. Blencowe, a faded weary woman, cumbered with much serving and the cares of a continual struggle between ways and means, spoke of such a death, which this young girl in her loveliness, with life yet fresh before her, could regard as a possible good. Honor was not looking at him : the two were standing by the open

door, in front, and she was gazing away, straight over the brown-green moorland, to the morning haze beyond. He had wondered last night if her eyes were sad, he did not wonder now; their far-off dreary regard was sadder than would have been any impress of sharp aching pain, which might have borne with it a hope of healing. There was no hope and no wistfulness in this girl's gaze across the heath, which seemed to Nugent no unfit emblem of her life, 'the level waste, the rounding grey,' of these months and years spent here, with no change except such as the seasons brought. Nugent had gathered, from several things Mrs. Ross said, that neither she nor her niece was in the habit of leaving their home. A sudden stirring of his blood made him long to let his companion know

a fairer and brighter existence. She could not always live thus; it was surely only the natural yearning for other aspects of life which spoke in the dreary voice, that still echoed through his brain, though he answered lightly.

‘I didn’t see it in that way last night; those old mines were awful bugbears to me.’

‘Of course, if one thought of them, they would be,’ Honor answered; then turned and went into the parlour, Nugent following her. She removed a heavy cloth, draping something on a side table, which proved to be a cage with a bird therein—a young gull. As she knelt down to examine it, and Nugent came nearer, as if drawn by her presence, she looked up.

‘It has broken its leg,’ she said. ‘I

found it the day before yesterday down the cliff.

So that was the object that had carried her down the rocks, with sure eye and fearless foot. Nugent could not tell her he had seen her, or how the little act of pity touched a sudden new chord of feeling in him. Only she was so fair, kneeling there, by the side of the hurt bird she had saved.

‘It will be all right in a few days, poor thing,’ she said, as she attended to its needs. Then, as Ruth brought in the breakfast-plenishing, she helped her as on the previous night. There was a fire in the grate, and it was not unwelcome, for the air from the open window, pleasant as it was, bore in the coolness of the sea. Nugent stood thereby, feeling very useless

without the power of being otherwise. Honor did not speak to him while she was busy ; but when she had measured the tea into the pot and placed the latter down in the fender, without filling it up from the bright copper kettle set on the fire, it was, perhaps, the feeling his presence a weight upon her, which prompted her to ask—

‘Do you care to read? If so, please find a book. My aunt may be some time yet.’

He obediently selected a volume from the small case close to his hand, but without noticing what it might be. Though his eyes were apparently fixed on its pages he could still see the girl standing by the window, plucking at a fern leaf as if in thought. She was still there when Mrs.

Ross and the breakfast made their appearance together.

Honor poured out the tea; but silence had resumed its sway over her, and Nugent was unreasonably vexed that she was again herself of the previous night, icy and impassible, so that he did not dare attempt to break down the wall of her coldness.

When he was starting for Carnwith, however, it was she who directed, clearly and concisely, the path he was to take. 'Glad enough to get rid of me,' the young man thought, with some irritation.

'Thank you,' he said, 'and good-bye, Miss——' he hesitated, and she filled up the pause. 'My name is Ross,' she said, 'like my aunt's. Good-bye, Mr. Nugent.'

But Mrs. Ross did not part with him

with so little regret. 'I am glad you found your way here,' she said, 'and I shall always value the sketch. If you are going to stay at Lynion, won't you——' she hesitated and looked questioningly at Honor; but her words gave Nugent courage. 'May I come over and see you some day?' he asked.

He spoke to Mrs. Ross, but he too looked at Honor. It was Honor who answered, not till after a moment's pause and a glance at Mrs. Ross's face had shown Nugent it was her elder's pleasure she consulted 'If you wish it,' she said, 'come.'

CHAPTER VI.

‘ And a bird overhead sang “ follow,”
And a bird to the right sang “ here,”
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear.’

DAN, lying in luxurious ease, cocked up his ears and gave a short bark of recognition. Honor, couched down amid a tall confusion of golden ragwort and bracken and red robin, heard the voice and lifted her head, her lips grave, but a shining in her eyes. She did not move, but listened, as the song turned into a whistle, and then again broke into words, in a clear baritone, and there came a crashing of steps through the scrub above her, as Nugent sprang down, tramp-

ling on the thick growth of fern and wild flower, till he reached her side.

‘I hoped I should find you here,’ he said, as Honor half rose to greet him, and Dan accorded him a delighted welcome. He sat down below her, on the slope, so that he could see her reclining, with the tall golden flowers, like stars about her head.

‘Have you ended work for to-day?’

‘Yes; I half hoped,’ he said diffidently, ‘that you might have wandered my way and seen it.’

‘Is it getting on?’

‘Nearly finished.’ There was regret in his voice. Then he added, ‘I have been five weeks, as it is; the rain delayed me so.’

‘Have you?’ said Honor, with a little start. ‘Yes, it is July now.’

‘And your garden is in full blossom.’ It was a name he had given this tiny glen, to which Honor had one day guided him, a sheltered rift in the cliffs, shadowed above by a thick growth of blackthorn and other shrubs on its brow, and overrun by the lush growth of flower and bracken and heather, whose purple flush was beginning now to creep over the land. From above, a tiny stream fell down, in the trickle of a thread of waterfall, shining under the wreathed sprays of bramble, with their purple leaves and tender-hued flowers, garlanded with the graceful honeysuckle trails. In the centre of the glen shot up one tall spire of a yellow foxglove, as the heart of the stillness, the queen of the crowd of campion and ragwort, tangled together in a milky way of misty hemlock flowers.

‘I should like to make a sketch of this place,’ Nugent said, looking away to where, beyond the stretching-out crags and slopes which shut in the glen, was a glimpse of sea, of a deeper blue than was the serene sky overhead. ‘I don’t know, though ; I shall remember it better without one. Trying to set down every beautiful thing one sees, is like turning all one’s best life into verse.’

‘I couldn’t do either,’ said Honor, ‘so I can’t tell. Perhaps I remember better because of that : but things are always the same when they come back ; one may put them away, but when one thinks of them, it is the same as ever—for ever.’

Her tone was that which always smote on his heart, from the capacity of pain it showed in her, this girl whom he thought

he knew as a man can only know the woman he loves, whom he seemed now to have loved from that moment when he had first seen her coming towards him, slender, and swift, and beautiful, across the moor.

‘Is it so?’ he questioned. ‘Old scars may throb and ache at times, but they are not like the pain of a fresh wound.’

‘They would bleed again, if the person who caused them came near,’ she answered, scarcely as recalling a fantastic legend, but as speaking a truth.

‘Only with a corpse,’ said Nugent. ‘Life holds the power of healing, and so the wounds would close up with time.’

‘But the memory would always remain,’ she answered, and he could not

gainsay her; the ugly memories of his own life forbade him; the ghosts of weakness and sin and folly, which had never hurt him as they did now, when at times their shades would rise as accusing and bringing him into judgment, in the presence of those deep, clear eyes which now looked at him, with no love, it is true, but also with no shadow of the defiance with which they had at first met him—only with the pure, frank trust of a friend.

It was much to have won this, nor had it been gained without patience and endeavour; very gradually, during Nugent's stay at Lynion, had the girl softened towards him, or, as it sometimes seemed, relaxed a guard kept over herself. Time after time her silence and abruptness had returned,

but Stephen discovered that, after such moods, she was nearly sure to make amends by a gentler mien, when they met again. So, as the days went on, his visit to Trebarva—as that grey lonely house on the heath was named—grew more frequent. Now and then, at his request, Honor would even come to view his pictures, where he sat painting, in a little bay, not half a mile from Lunion; and once she had taken him in her boat to view a wonderful cave. He had discovered that her favourite haunt was this glen he called her garden, and sometimes, when the desire to see her was too strong to be controlled, he would wander there, on the chance of finding her, as he had done to-day.

He did not deceive himself; he knew Honor had no idea of love for him; she had

allowed a friendship to grow up between them; not, as he felt, without a struggle of some sort within her own mind—whether with reserve, pride, prejudice, he could not tell—and even now he sometimes fancied the ‘reciprocity was all on his side.’ He hoped to win her, hoped passionately, with all he renewed eagerness of youth, which had returned to him, in this dawn of love that had revealed life to him, as no feeling had ever done before; but instinct taught him, that any word of this would, as yet, meet with a sure rebuff, and might destroy his cause utterly. That fierce untamedness that had at first struck him still existed in Honor, though it slept, and she held her life to herself.

He knew her—yes, by her look, her actions, her voice, read by the light of his

own passion ; but she had never revealed herself to him ; even that sadness of voice and words that sometimes pained him for her was an obscuring of his knowledge of her, for it spoke of depths in her nature, to which he held no clue. He knew nothing of her past life, heard nothing of relationships, or of any links between her and the outside world, except such as came from books. She seemed to have lived at Trebarva from childhood.

It certainly was a surprise to Nugent, one day, when he discovered that Mrs. Ross was one of those happy people who have a defined object in life, which is likely to occupy them till death. The fact of her content in the slow current of her existence was easily explained, when it was once known that this quiet, faded lady

was a scholar and a deep one, who if, like poor Evadne, she could 'do no good, because a woman, reached constantly at something that was near it.' A new theory of Hittite theology, that should prove all existing authorities on the subject, both English and German, but blind leaders of the blind, kept her faculties interested and her pen occupied, even when she was not employed in wading through interminable tomes on the subject, chiefly printed in crabbed German type. Whether her great work, embodying all this labour, would ever see the light seemed doubtful; but she had an entire faith in her theory, if not in herself, and that contented her.

'Even if I fail to prove it, someone else will succeed,' she said to Nugent, at the time she revealed to him this great object

of her life—somewhat timidly at first, but warming into enthusiasm as she went on ; ‘ so it is all right.’

‘ It seems such an out-of-the-way subject, for a woman to take up,’ the young man said afterwards to Honor, telling her of his astonishment at this glimpse into the stores of research and knowledge, which Mrs. Ross kept, as a rule, concealed. ‘ And she is so wonderfully learned ; it came on me with a shock of surprise.’

‘ I don’t think it is strange,’ returned Honor, with a touch of her old abruptness. ‘ The first idea of the theory was her husband’s ; she loved him dearly, and they had only been married two years when he died. He was very interested in this, and had taught her to be the same ; so it

was as though she was doing his work for him, when he was dead, and she must carry it through. She worked and read and thought'—as if in despite of herself, the girl's eyes brightened and her voice took a passionate ring—'though she was very poor and had to earn her living at the same time, and the one or two clever men she asked about it laughed at her husband's theory; but all the same she went on working, never giving it up, struggling to learn what she needed to know before she could understand her ground fully. I don't know what it is all about, but I hope she will prove it. Still it is not strange, only natural; as natural as though it were a child he had left her to bring up. It is all for him.'

'I see,' was all Nugent responded.

Honor, unconsciously to herself, had, in revealing to him the mainspring of this other woman's action, shown the woman in her own nature. She drew back into her shell again, directly. 'Perhaps I oughtn't to have told you so much about her,' she said, 'but I wanted you to understand.' The last words touched Nugent with quick pleasure; they were the nearest sign she had given of confidence in him.

'July,' he repeated after a while, when, this afternoon, they had both sat silent for some minutes, watching the light deepen in the west. 'May I walk back with you to Trebarva this evening? It will be nearly my last visit.'

'I think Aunt Mary expects you,' was Honor's answer. It rather irritated

Nugent; he would have liked her to bid him more directly.

‘Are you going away so soon?’ she asked. Stephen fancied for a moment there was regret in her voice, and it made him bold, though he only answered—

‘When my work is done, next week.’

Then the passionate desire for a sign overcame him, and he turned to look at her, where she sat above him. ‘We are friends?’ he said, putting out his hand; and hers answered it. An instant quick rush of joy made his heart swell, but she had withdrawn her hand again, as though the instinct which prompted her were not justified to her own mind. ‘Are we?’ she questioned.

‘You know best,’ Nugent returned bitterly; the jar of disappointment, caused by her words, was too sudden to be

hidden. He had never so spoken to her before, and her answer came with strange gentleness, as though she felt a reproach :

‘How can we be? you are going away, and we live quite apart. Even if we didn’t, I could never be of any use or good to you.’

‘Or I to you, you mean,’ he said, the bitterness not quite gone from his voice.

‘I didn’t think of that’—the truth of the words made him ashamed of his impatience. ‘The thought of a friend is good,’ he answered. ‘Although one may never see him, or hear of him. A man’s saving your life doesn’t make you friends with him ; it may do the reverse.’

She smiled, and her smile was like a seal of the bond between them which he had claimed. He spoke no word of re-

turning to Cornwall, after he should have left it, but the burden of the song, ‘*Schweig stille, mein Herz, schweig still,*’ was repeating itself, like a sweet refrain of warning, within him. It was so hard to be silent, and yet one word of love might lose him all. Friendship he might claim now, but love—ah! when? the proud virginal curves of the lips, the clear silence of the eyes, forbade him, even while they quickened his passion.

‘I think we ought to go home,’ Honor said, rising at last from amidst the fern. ‘Dan wants his supper, if we don’t.’

Dan wagged his tail, in grateful acknowledgment of his mistress’s consideration, and started away across the heath, in an ecstasy of barking, while Honor and Stephen followed more leisurely, and, as

they gained the top of the hill, turned with one accord to look at the sunset glow, already touching the western sea, and filling the world with an air of glory. The warm light fell on the curve of Honor's cheek and neck, and brightened the softness of her hair; her eyes seemed to have caught the colour of the sea, where its depths were shadowed by the cliffs above. Nugent had the sense of being in a dream; the moment was so hushed, the wild scent of the flowers and heather at their feet so sweet. If he could only read the future, he thought, in the sunset, as in a magic mirror, his future—and hers.

They turned away from the western light, taking the narrow track towards Trebarva, across the moors, where scattered sheep were nibbling the scanty

turf. Presently, Honor's home faced them, its grey walls sad and stern, but the windows flashing back the sunset blaze, as though on fire within. It was a large rambling house, of more dignity than most of the farmhouses scattered about the country, but able to match with any in dreariness from the absence of tree or grass or stream; and the garden seemed sadder than all the rest, in spite of its fence of tamarisk, the livid blue of the hydrangea and the golden fire of marigolds—about the only flowers that would grow therein, except in one corner, where clove carnations flourished, in a thick splendour of dusky red, filling the air with their richness of scent. A garden without a tree or a blade of grass, and where not a rose will bloom, is no garden at all.

CHAPTER VII.

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?—VILLON.

MRS. ROSS was in the parlour, bending over her interminable manuscript, with one or two piles of books for reference by her.

‘Mr. Nugent has come back with me, Mary,’ said Honor, speaking in the doorway, but not entering, as Stephen held the door open for her. As she turned away, she looked up at him, saying, ‘Thank you,’ as though the little conventional act held for her this once a meaning of thought and helpfulness. A lonely life is apt to foster a terrible habit of earnestness.

She went straight up to her own room,

leaving Mrs. Ross and Stephen in converse ; there was a flush on her cheek, as of a repressed excitement, scarcely understood by herself, from the breaking down of some barrier of long self-control. She was like one coming from a dark room into fresh air and sunlight, dazzled and confused by the change. She threw off her hat, as if its pressure hurt her, pressing her hand over her forehead, and pushing from it the heavy growth of her hair ; then stood still, the slender strong hand still propping the head, as in thought.

‘ His friend ! ’ her memory repeated as though pleading with herself. She could not help it, if he willed it so ; everything had been so different since he came ; when he should have gone, how !—she rose and went to the window, overpowered by

the sense of the heavy change it would be, when she could no longer wonder in the morning if the day would see him crossing the moor to Trebarva; when each effort towards friendship which she had repulsed would come back to her with the bitterness of lost opportunity. He had tried to be her friend all along, had been kind and gentle in spite of her coldness and rudeness, and now that he had conquered them, was going away, most likely never to come again.

She must let these few last days that yet remained be bright; a thirst all at once possessed her for what she had resolutely put away from her this last month. To what good had she denied herself this sweetness of pleasant comradeship and friendship—how pleasant she had never

known till now that its possibility was nearly past—and where was the unreasoning bitterness she had felt against Nugent at first, and had striven to maintain? Vanished, she knew not whither; all that remained was a longing for the pardon she knew he would freely give, but which the very instinct which made her desire it, forbade her to crave. No matter; they were friends now; ‘friends’—the last word came softly unawares from her lips.

‘Honor! Honor! are you not coming down?’

Mrs. Ross’s voice from below startled her. She had no time to think, and acted on the impulse of her will, hardly knowing what she did, as she loosened the thick coil of her hair and, rapidly combing through its meshes, knotted it again, in a freshly

twisted mass, low on her neck. She knelt down and, opening the lowest drawer of the tall, brass-handled chest, pulled therefrom a white gown, soft and flowing, with full ruffles of old yellow lace at throat and wrists. There was no coquetry in this, it was but the outcome of the new-born, passionate desire to feel the whole world fair, for this little while; she did not want Mr. Nugent to remember her only in her rough blue serge, as harsh as her manner had been.

And so she went downstairs.

Stephen was standing talking to Mrs. Ross, as Honor entered the parlour; he looked up and beheld her, a white vision, her eyes alight with a new splendour; her cheeks yet faintly flushed; the dim yellow of the thick plaitings of lace showing

deeper against the tender hue of throat and hands; the trailing dress making her appear taller than usual.

‘Why, Honor!’ exclaimed Mrs. Ross, too taken by surprise to hide the fact.

‘It was so hot,’ the girl said: ‘I rummaged out a cooler gown.’ She did not look at Nugent, but she felt the mute praise, and it overcame her with an agony of shame. She wished she had never changed her dress. A new fear of Nugent had been born within her, he had become her standard of right and wrong, and the sudden sense of foolishness and vanity in her own heart made her feel condemned in his.

Mrs. Ross left the room, in order to clear ‘the mark of the beast,’ as she expressed it—*i.e.* ink stains—from her

fingers, and there was silence in the room. Honor leant over the corner of the table, out of the open window, striving to reach a carnation which grew below it, and obviate the need of her speaking first. A movement of her arm pushed a pile of papers off the table, the breeze caught them, and the sheets fluttered all about the room, in most admired disorder. Nugent and she both stooped to pick them up, and, as they did so, he could not help seeing the figures and letters scribbled over the pages. Their eyes met and they both smiled, Honor somewhat shamefacedly.

‘Surprise number two,’ Stephen said. ‘I beg your pardon, I am very impertinent, but I have only just overcome the fear of Mrs. Ross which fell on me when I discovered her pursuits, and this is worse.’

He spoke lightly, to hide his embarrassment; for, in truth, he was a little afraid of her resenting his discovery of her study of the higher mathematics. The scrawled-over sheets told their own story of steady, severe work, before she could have tackled those 'agreeable combinations of letters and figures,' the very sight of which inspired Nugent, who had hated mathematics from his early youth, with a holy horror.

But the incident had broken Honor's chain of feeling, and so she was thankful for it, albeit ashamed, as girls still will be, in spite of Girton and M.A. degrees, when men discover them working in the ground so long guarded and fenced against their invasion. 'It was only,' she said, 'that anything does to occupy one.'

'Was this what you were absorbed in,

that first evening I came?' he asked, a hint of satire in his tone.

'Yes.' She did not add how little work she had done since then.

'You really are so fond of these things, as to work at them without an aim?'—— then he stopped: she might have an aim, and his question be an impertinence. Perhaps she wished to teach; involuntarily he smiled at the idea, though he could scarce have told why it seemed so ridiculous.

'No, I'm not fond of them,' she replied curtly, as though tired of the subject; 'but they prevent one from thinking;' and at that moment Mrs. Ross returned.

'You never play?' Nugent said, glancing at the aged, tall piano, in a corner of the room. 'There seems to be more pleasure in that than in most things.'

‘Never.’

‘Except on the old spinet upstairs,’ said Mrs. Ross.

‘That was only for curiosity’s sake,’ returned Honor, ‘and you can’t call my strumming, playing.’

‘I like the spinet,’ said Mrs. Ross to Nugent; ‘it sounds so sad—only an echo of the music that was once played on it.’

‘A very flat and jingling echo,’ put in Honor.

‘I did not know you had a spinet,’ observed Nugent, as though his non-acquaintance with that fact were a grievance.

‘Would you care to see it?’ asked Mrs. Ross. ‘It is in the little parlour we only use in the winter, because it faces the west. Will you come?’

‘May I hear it?’ he said, looking at

Honor. It was the first favour he had ever asked at her hands. She rose and went before them, the flowing of her white dress drifting in front of Nugent and Mrs. Ross like a cloud, as she led the way upstairs. The little parlour was a quaint room with pale green walls and stiff, slender-legged furniture, not very elaborate or pretty; across the windows was set the spinet, its satinwood dull and tarnished by years.

‘You will have to make believe very much, I warn you,’ said Mrs. Ross, as Honor seated herself before the discoloured key-board.

She would have spoken truth, had the music it held for the young man been in the thin tinkle of the notes, but it was not. The melody was there, in the girl seated

before the old music-box, her head thrown out in profile against the pale jasper light of the west, the softness of her white garments misty around her. Was it making believe very much, to see in her, with her strange moods, varying as the sea, a forecast vision of tenderest and noblest womanhood, gentler because stronger than Raphael's sweet maid-mother, her unlikeness to whom had struck him that first night of his coming to Trebarva?

'I think Ruth was in the right,' opined Mrs. Ross, 'when she objected to the sound of this spinet, because it was like ghosts making a noise. But I wonder who cared for music in these wilds a hundred years ago? My great-grandmother, I suppose, or my great-grand-aunt'—she glanced at two faded, vague miniatures of high-fore-

headed, long-necked ladies, in black frames, above the mantelshef.

‘Have your family been here so long?’ said Nugent.

‘Much longer; those old shafts that you dreaded were the pits in which they buried their fortunes, such as they were; and it was some remote great-grandfather who left his home, near Penzance, and built this house—I suppose to be close to the object of his passion—the mines.’

‘Was his devotion rewarded?’

‘As most grand passions are—by ruin; but look at the moon rising. You will have a lovely night for your walk home; as light as day.’

‘I like the coastguard’s path best,’ he said, turning to Honor, who still sat at the old spinet, fingering the notes dumbly. ‘It

is longer, but I share Ruth's dislike of ghosts, and always expect to meet one, crossing the moor.'

'Don't talk of ghosts in the twilight,' said Mrs. Ross, 'I don't like it; and, Honor, you look so like one, sitting there. Come downstairs to the lamp and supper.'

But in the parlour below Honor was not like a ghost, with the light in her eyes and the softness of her lips, though she hardly spoke. As she helped Ruth, as usual, in clearing away, Nugent forestalled her in lifting the tray. 'You will let me take it now, won't you?' he said. She made no answer, but he had his will and carried the tray in triumph to the kitchen, where Joshua sat in the calm of absolute content, in a wooden arm-chair by the fire, playing at 'Patience' with the cards spread on a

trestle in front of him, and assisting his mental struggles over this amusement by the soothing influence of his pipe. His tranquillity annoyed his wife from its force of contrast with her own state of mind, a restless activity, which, finding scarcely sufficient outlet in the even tenor of life at Trebarva, had vent in scolding her husband, who showed the unmoveable stolidity of a sailor used to storms, under the hail of Ruth's eloquence.

‘If you was half a man, you’d stand outside the door and take the tray from me,’ quoth his wife, with cutting scorn; ‘instead o’ letting a strange gentleman, or Miss Honor, make beasts o’ burden o’ themselves in this way.’

‘You told me never to come anigh the parlour o’ nights,’ mumbled her husband,

recognising Nugent's advent by an odd salutation, half rising, half nod, and returning to his occupation of dealing out cards with a horny hand, and pondering over his play, with his pipe held away from his mouth, and one meditative finger scratching his nose. 'Besides, *your* arms are strong enough, as I know well, and so does the broomstick.'

'Oh, Balaam's ass was nought with you, i' the way o' answering,' returned Ruth, scornfully ignoring both the sarcastic inuendo as to her conjugal habits, and the fit of chuckling which the consideration of his own wit caused Joshua, some moments afterwards. 'If you muddled your head less with pipes and cider and them devil's books, there'd be some chance o' your hearing "Well done, good and

faithful servant," at the Last Day ; but as it is, you're like Thomas, unbelieving, and I've done with you.—What 'll you have for supper, old man?' The conclusion of this exordium reached Nugent's ears as he was turning away from the kitchen, and made him regard Ruth as less of a Tartar than its beginning and plentiful seasoning of Scripture allusions would have caused him to do.

The front door was open, and in the garden beyond he saw the glimmer of a white dress, in the pale light of the rising moon. It was Honor leaning on the gate ; she turned as his foot ground the broken shells and pebbles of the pathway.

'It was so hot,' she said, 'I came out for air. Don't you know how sometimes

the feeling of being in a room almost stifles you?’

‘As though it were closing in and one must struggle to be free, like life sometimes.’ The meaning might have been more clearly expressed, but Honor’s one intense ‘yes’ told she understood him.

‘Only with life,’ he said, ‘you can’t always get into the fresh air at will.’

‘Then what does one do?—die?’

There was a cry in her voice that frightened him.

‘What is much the same,’ he answered, ‘or—I suppose the orthodox answer would be—do our duty in that state of life, &c. &c.’

‘But if one has never tried to do one’s duty, one never thinks of it.’

‘I don’t know,’ he said; ‘I have never

tried.' His own words startled him ; he had spoken carelessly, and they faced him like a stern condemnation of his whole life.

'Is that the punishment of not doing right—not to know it from wrong?'

Her eyes were questioning his face, as though in his answer might lie the gospel. Nugent had never endured such self-abasement as was his now, feeling the girl trusted, as better and stronger than herself, him to whom her innocence and truth were as something awful. Simple as her words were, he could only answer, 'I don't understand ;' for who was he, that he should be a judge over her and settle for her, questions which, it seemed to him at that moment, he had shirked facing all his life?

'I mean,' she explained, a timidity lending pathos to her voice, 'if anyone has

never thought—has only gone on living, and has to do something which one has never dreamed of before, and couldn't have told if it would be right or wrong ; would one know, then?' Her earnestness was painful to Nugent ; he did not answer for a moment. Then :

‘One thing,’ he said, ‘I have always believed, though it isn't much good to you, who have never known what a black thing the wrong of the world really means, or how terrible it would be to be part of it oneself ; as sometimes a man feels he must be when he thinks how he pleases himself, how little he thinks of any other soul—I can't help fancying that in every man's and woman's life is a moment when they know the choice is clear before them—like Hercules—and, as they choose then,

so their lives will be. The moment may come early in some lives, late in others; and its choice, if one decides right, must be a strength from that time, helping one in little things and great.'

'But if one did not know it, and chose the wrong?'

'Then it would be no choice; the worst, or best, of my faith,' continued Nugent, with a rather cynical laugh, 'is that it induces one to drift on very comfortably till that redeeming moment shall come and clear off all old scores against us; and, after all, it never may arrive. Oh, look!' his voice suddenly changing, 'how lovely the colour of the heather is in the moonlight—no, it is not colour, only the feeling of it.'

She did not reply. A woman cannot

cast off the semblance of a graver mood that has touched her as easily as can a man ; or, at all events, a girl of twenty-one cannot do so as freely as a man of over thirty, to whom, just then, his outward life is sufficient. In the faint dark beauty of the cloud of purple heather, spreading over the moorland, in the tender air of the summer night, the deep-hued sky, the far-off sound and light of the moon-washed waves—in all these, Nugent felt the charm of the hour and the presence which he must leave ere long. They seemed to blend with the sense of Honor herself, and, in them, he forgot all else, regret and endeavour alike. Hope grew strong in his heart ; he would surely return, surely win her. ‘ *Schweig stille, mein Herz, schweig still.*’

CHAPTER VIII.

We two stood by with never a third,
But each to each as we knew full well.

By the Fireside.

HONOR said 'good night' and turned to the house; but Dan had no intention of retiring to rest so soon. True, he ran back to the door after her; but there he halted. His mistress turned round, and Dan, taking this as a sign of her consent to a moonlight ramble, gave a joyful bark and sprang to where Stephen was still waiting by the gate—watching them.

'Shall I take him to Lanyon with me?' he asked. 'I will return him tomorrow.'

Honor had come slowly down the garden path, and was leaning on the gate; the dog crouching by her side with eyes of wistful expectancy. She shook her head, smiling.

‘You would be very sorry you had made the offer,’ she answered. ‘No, Dan and I must go in, though the night is so lovely.’

There was something of reluctance in her tone, and she spoke the truth. The night was lovely; so lovely, it acted like a charm on the young man as he stood there gazing at Honor, slender in the whiteness of the moonlight; her eyes as deep and as beautiful as by day. Was it only the night, or his past repression and the spell of her presence, which made him bolder than he had ever been before?

‘Why must you go in?’ he asked; ‘Dan wants a run; come a little way, only a little way, with me.’

She hesitated. ‘I must tell Aunt Mary,’ she said, ‘or she will be frightened that I have come to grief on the rocks.’

She vanished indoors, where Mrs. Ross was sitting dreaming. ‘I am just going to the turn of the cliff with Mr. Nugent,’ she said. The frank carelessness of the tone was not a blind; or, if it was, it blinded herself. Mrs. Ross looked up; for one moment an idea struck her, but she dismissed it. Somehow, she could never entertain the idea of Honor softening to any man. ‘Don’t go too far,’ she said, rather anxiously; ‘it is a dangerous path.’

‘I know every step of the way,’ Honor returned, with some scorn; ‘Mr. Nugent

is in more danger than I am, yet he thinks he can look after me.'

And Mrs. Ross knew enough of life to feel sure that while a woman holds a man's protection lightly, she is in small danger of caring for him.

Yet, indifferent as Honor appeared, there was a strange new pleasure to her—of which she showed nothing—in even such a slight service as Nugent tendered her, in unlatching the gate as they strayed out together across the moonlit heath. Perhaps it was only the softness of the air, the clear shining of the moon above their heads, the long radiance of light on the sea, and the sweet, far-off 'murmur of the moon-led waters white,' which influenced her so, that Stephen felt his soul swell suddenly within him, as at some chance

word her eyes met his. The sadness of her gaze was more wistful; and surely there was a new awakening in it, a strange yearning, childlike and tender, which made his heart beat fast with a rapture akin to pain: the desire to fall at her feet, and holding those beautiful hands prisoned in his, to cover them with kisses, and then, oh, then to tell her how he loved her!

In another moment he had the impulse under control, and they slowly wandered on, side by side, down the rugged coast-guard's path, along the slopes of the cliff, till they came to a point where it grew impossible to walk two abreast. Here Honor halted, as if to return.

‘Oh, don't go yet!’ he implored. ‘Do sit down here a little while and watch, see, till that boat has passed where the

moon is on the water. We have gone a very short way.'

'It is quite far enough,' Honor answered; but she seated herself, watching the distant fishing-boat, absently, intently.

'Hark! what is that?'

A very distant sound of voices and laughter caught their ears. Honor listened.

'I suppose they are launcing,' she said, 'at Maryn Bay. The night is so still, we can hear all this way off.'

'What is launcing? I had the little sand-eels for breakfast one day, and thought them very good; but how are they caught? I can't make out.'

'Don't you know? You ought to have got some of the fisher-boys to take you to Maryn Bay. Ruth and I often go down to the little cove, where my boat is kept, and

where there is a strip of sand, and we have it all to ourselves, with one or two of the coastguard children.'

'But does Mrs. Ruth launce?'

'Of course she does; and it is great fun,' said the girl, a fresh healthy amusement brightening her face. 'You can only launce when the moon is high and the tide low. You go just where the waves break, and scratch with an iron hook in the wet sand, till you see something wriggle, and you clutch it. That is your launce, and sometimes it runs down into the sea, and you run after it.'

'Exciting, if damp,' returned Stephen; 'but for Mrs. Ruth, I should think rheuma——'

'Don't suggest it to her,' said Honor, 'or you will offend her mortally.'

It was not a romantic conversation, but Stephen was well content with any subject which would make Honor talk freely with him, as now, with a curving smile on her lips, while she sat on the rock, gathering some sprays of heather which grew near.

‘How sweet your carnations are!’ he said, more for the sake of breaking the silence than anything else.

She took them from her belt indifferently. ‘Yes,’ she answered; ‘but they are such sultry flowers, one grows tired of them.’

Stephen remembered Perdita: remembered too the ‘Shepherd’s Calendar,’ with its

Coronations and sops-in-wine
Worn of paramours.

He would have given the world to ask for one of those blood-red flowers, with their

passionate, heavy perfume, and yet he did not dare.

‘Do you like honeysuckle? See, there is some down there on the lower slope.’

‘Don’t get it; your foot might slip.’

The command was an entreaty. He laughed, and swung himself down to where his eye had caught sight of the tangled wreath of blossoms dim in the moonlight. When he came back he saw she was pale, with a set, strained look on her face. The red flowers and the heather she had picked had fallen to the ground unheeded.

‘What is it?’ he asked.

‘You frightened me. It was not safe.’

Stephen laughed. ‘It was quite safe; but anyhow you should not blame me. You are far more venturesome, as our nurses used to call it, than I am. I shall

not soon forget when I saw you climb down that cliff at Lynion, after the seagull.' A real shiver passed through him as he recalled it.

'You saw me?'

'Yes; I was painting close by—will you be angry with me if——?'

'What?'

He made an effort to speak easily, unconcernedly—it was not very successful.

'I have no right to ask—but if you would promise me not to risk your life again like that.'

She drew up her head slightly, but now that he had spoken, he had gained courage and met her gaze fully.

'Will you?' he asked. 'You know it is not right. You must not.'

The firm quiet tone touched her with

a sense of sweetness in submission; her 'I promise' was like that of a docile child.

For one brief and perfect moment it made Stephen Nugent sure she loved him.

He dared not, however, test his faith, and in another moment it seemed no longer his, and the warning voice within him cried, 'Not yet; not yet.' The fishing-boat they were watching slid silently across the shining track, and Honor rose.

'I must go,' she said. 'Good night.'

'I shall see you back,' he said quietly, in a tone that brooked no denial. They did not speak much; Honor appeared to be thinking. She held the wreath of honeysuckle in her hands as she bade him good night again at the gate. In truth, she was pondering over his words in the garden.

Nugent turned back, tracking his path,

till he came to the point where they had sat, and where the carnations still lay dark on the grey turf. He picked them up, meditating somewhat discontentedly, 'Not that they are worth much; she did not give them to me.'

Still she had gathered and worn and held them, and their fragrance was blended with the echoes of the old spinet, the new softness of Honor's voice and eyes. Sudden and daring and sweet, the thought of heart and soul took form in one word, the meaning of which he seemed never to have known before, and which now called up a thousand dreams and hopes, so precious and sacred in their rapture that they appeared akin to the moonlight, and too fair to bear the light of day, all fulfilled in that one word—wife.

CHAPTER IX.

Cold, cold as death the tide came up
In no manner of haste.—GEORGE MACDONALD.

‘WHAT are you goin’ to do, Miss Honor?
Let the bird away?’

‘Yes; its leg is strong now, and it hates
the cage.’

As Honor spoke, she opened the door
of the sea-gull’s prison. At first the crea-
ture did not understand: then, as it saw
its freedom, it darted through the opening
of the cage into the air, rose and fluttered
and sailed away seaward, leaving Honor
with her eyes fixed on its flight and an
unreasoning sadness at her heart. She

was angry with herself for the ache within her.

‘The others will peck it to death, now it’s a stranger,’ observed Ruth. ‘It had better ’a kept to the cage.’

‘It didn’t think so.’ Honor turned abruptly and went in from the garden, leaving Ruth to meditate on the empty cage; she went into the sitting-room, where Mrs. Ross was employed on her pet occupation—delicate white embroidery—as a relaxation from Hamath. Honor wished feverishly she could find soothing in cutting little holes in cambric, and sewing round their edges; but as she could not, she opened the drawer where lay the books and papers which she used as an anodyne for the unrest that would beset her, and tried to apply herself to mathematics.

To-day, however, they failed of their result and almost maddened her. She hated the letters and numbers before her, as though they had been live things; taskmasters set by herself, to grind down and keep under the life and youth which cried within her. But this time, their slaves rose up in rebellion against them; she pushed the papers away from her, with 'a good dash' that made Mrs. Ross look up from her needlework. Honor gave a fierce, short, impatient laugh. 'If I were a little girl,' she said, 'you would tell me to go on with my lessons. As it is, I don't know what to do.' She lingered sitting there, a brooding melancholy in her eyes, then sprang up.

'I shall go out in the boat. I want to

get tired ; that is the only thing that does me good.'

'Honor dear !'

The tenderness and pity of the elder woman's face caused a pang, as of remorse, to shoot through Honor. 'You are very good, Mary,' she said, 'to bear with me as you do.' Impulsively she knelt and leant her head against Mrs. Ross's knee, with a childlike clinging to the unspoken, unselfish sympathy with all her moods. The two women rarely put their inner feelings into words to each other. 'Good-bye,' Honor said at the door. Then she went out, followed by Dan, whose expectancy of an excursion with his mistress was, however, doomed to be disappointed.

'No, Dan, you are too much trouble in the boat.—Here, Ruth,' she said, open-

ing the kitchen door, 'will you take care of Dan? I am going in the boat, and don't want him with me.'

'You're not going off without your dinner,' quoth Ruth sternly; 'leastways you'll take it with you.'

'I don't want anything, and I can't wait,' returned Honor, but Ruth was not to be put off so.

'I remember that day the tide was against you and you didn't come in till ten at night, as white and spent for want of food as you could be; and it doesn't happen again, Miss Honor, if I know it.' Here Ruth pulled out a basket and began to stock it. 'There's the cold duck, and Nellie Cogan brought some fresh cream and some cherries this morning; so you'll have some of them.'

Farther resistance was useless, and Honor waited till the basket was delivered to her, and Dan, wistful-eyed and longing, but knowing his fate for that day was kitchen or yard, watched his mistress's departure, feeling himself an ill-used dog, as, from the back door, he saw Honor take the path which led down, with many twists and turns, to a little cove where her boat was dragged up, high and dry, beyond the reach of the tide. It was a small, light craft, but strongly built and equal to rough weather, and, with some effort, Honor could launch it unaided. She would have made a fine study of supple strength and grace and energy, in a woman's form, as she pushed the boat down the shelving beach, till the keel, ceasing to grate against the stones, slid

into the lucid water. She leaped in, took up her sculls and rowed vigorously, for some time, with a steady, even stroke which bore her swiftly along, although she was pulling against the tide.

The sea was clear green, unbroken on the surface, but with a strong lazy groundswell which needed resistance and told of rougher waves, when the tide should presently return to the shore. After a while Honor drew in her oars, and resting on them, looked dreamily down at the clear water and the waving, indistinct masses of dark sea-plants beneath, shadowed and brightened by the softened sunlight which pierced through the crystal. So drifting with the sea, in the summer light; watching the flight of the sea-birds, as they swept or hovered over the sea; listening to their

wild cry and the echoed break of the waves on the shore, whatever unrest troubled the girl was hushed to sleep in a dream of warmth and radiance and lulling motion.

With a sigh, she resumed her oars and turned her course landward. All along the line of coast before her, ran cruel, straight, black cliffs, with brows frowning down on the rocks and surf and shingle below, which, here and there, ran out into reaches of sand, still wet and shining from the retreating tide. A shout from the shore startled her, and there, hailing her from an out-jutting rock, stood a figure she knew. An involuntary sweet light of pleasure crossed her face, and she turned to row where Nugent stood awaiting her, as she brought her boat near him, against the

side of the rock where the water was deep and calm.

‘I thought it was you,’ he said, ‘a long way off.’

‘How did you get here? You couldn’t have climbed down the cliffs.’

‘Or flown,’ he returned, his gladness at the unexpected meeting telling in his laugh. ‘No, I scrambled down about a mile further along, and feel as though the shore were mine by right of conquest. May I invite you to land?’

‘Are you painting here?’

‘My picture is finished, so I am sketching indiscriminately; the easel is on the other side of these rocks. I left it when I saw you.’

He had put out his hand to help her in landing, but she had sprung up on to the

rock, with that habit of self-reliance which he often felt as a purposed rebuff, and holding in her hand the rope end to attach the boat to her moorings. She looked round, as if doubtful where to fasten it.

‘No, this will do,’ she said in answer to a suggestion of Nugent’s, that he should take the boat round and drag it up on the sand, near where he was painting. She stuck up one of the sculls in a narrow cleft in the rocks, where it remained upright, tightly wedged in, and tied the rope round it so quickly that Nugent had no chance of helping her, beyond just testing the firmness with which the pole of the oar was fixed. ‘Now,’ she said, ‘which is the way to your kingdom?’

‘I wish I had brought some food,’ observed Nugent ruefully. ‘It is not a

very kingly fashion of entertaining a guest, this. If I had only dreamed I could meet you, I would have prepared a royal feast—as far as Lynion was equal to it—and we would have had a picnic.’

‘So we can,’ returned Honor, springing back into the boat and reaching under the seat for the basket she had forgotten. ‘Ruth insisted on supplying me as if I were off to America. Are you really hungry?’

‘Not a bit’—which was an untruth. ‘And you don’t think I am going to rob you?’

‘There is sure to be enough for three; Ruth’s idea is always, better too much than too little, and, as she says, one never knows what may happen. She will triumph, when I tell her of my meeting you to-day.’

They made their way across the projecting, craggy ridge of rocks, to where, on its other side, was a tiny bay, circled round by cliffs and rocks clothed in a sharp armour of mussels, which gave them a curious purple bloom, brightening in the sunlight to a metallic lustre. Nugent's easel was set up in the midst of the white, firm sand, under the shadow of a mighty boulder. 'This is the royal studio,' he said, turning round to Honor, with a grand air of courtesy. 'I think it must serve as drawing-room as well.'

'And dining-room too,' laughed Honor. She and Stephen had both the delightful sense of playing at something, which survives with most people, from their childhood, and the indulgence whereof seems, for a time, to bring that childhood

back, with its inconsequence and enjoyment and free happiness. Honor forgot to think, or remember, as she inspected Nugent's palace, and it was with a mood akin to hers he asked—

‘What time would you like to dine? With all deference to a distinguished guest, the gazing on the outside of that basket makes me feel as if I had been holding out a siege against the sea-gulls.’

‘Till I arrived with supplies,’ she replied, kneeling to unfasten the basket ‘But it is Ruth you have to thank—not me.’

‘To all, our thanks,’ quoted Stephen, his respect for Ruth, none the less, increased by the view of the basket's contents, even though she might have been considered to err on the side of liberality, in her provision

for one girl. 'I fear,' he apologised, 'the table must remain without a cloth. It is the fashion here; tables are so nowadays. Do you remember Eponine and the kitten?'

So the royal feast was merry; and Honor, as queen and guest, showed a more undimmed careless enjoyment of the hour than she had ever done before with Nugent. It made his heart strong within him, and emboldened him to say when the impromptu dinner was over, 'Don't go yet; wait while I finish my sketch, it won't take long, and this is my last day. Tomorrow I leave.'

'Yes,' she assented; but whether to his request, or to the fact of his departure, he could not tell. However, she sat there as he painted, and though they did not say

much, the minutes drifted on into hours, and neither seemed anxious to rise and go thence, till Honor said—

‘How much rougher it is, and how fast the tide is coming in!’

Nugent looked up, astonished to find how near to their feet were plunging the wild white horses, which were growing larger and stronger. ‘You will let me row you back?’ he pleaded. ‘It is too rough for you alone.’

‘I think I have had my boat out in worse seas than this,’ returned Honor, a slight, amused pique in her voice; ‘but you will have to come with me or swim. It is too late for you to go back to where you came down by—Pendravock, was it not? The sea is too high already for you to get round the point.’

‘I never thought of that,’ he exclaimed; ‘but for you I might have been badly off. Is there nowhere one can climb up farther along the other way?’

‘Not for nearly a mile; you would have a very long swim; too long in a sea like this. But as it is——’

‘I can finish my sketch in safety; that is, if you are not tired of waiting.’

‘No,’ she answered, and was silent. Despite his present security, Nugent’s words had raised before her a vision of what struggle might have been his with those strong waves which came beating in in curving lines of foam. The fancy would rise of his fighting them inch by inch; as inch by inch they conquered his resistance; of the salt-bitterness of the sea, blinding sight and stifling breath; and

then! The reality of the dream forced a low cry from her lips which startled him.

‘Are you tired?’ he said. ‘I oughtn’t to have kept you here so long.’

She rose, and stood looking across the Atlantic, as he folded his easel together. ‘There,’ he said, ‘this is my good-bye to this dear place.’ The fervour in his tone could not be restrained, and the same vague wonder filled both their souls, if ever again they two would stand thus together with their eyes fixed on those changing, wayward, eternal waters. It was scarcely a thought, only the feeling of parting drawing near them as the breakers were drawing nearer to their feet.

Then they turned away together, to find their way back across the rocks, to where they could see the blade of the oar

sticking up. They clambered towards it, Honor going first, Nugent following her. As she reached the ridge of rock, she stared out on the sea in a hopeless, amazed bewilderment; then faced Stephen, her look telling all, so that he divined the truth, ere he sprang to her side.

Whether Honor's springing back into the boat had loosened the knot of the rope she had believed secure, or whether the rope itself had been rotten, and its sawing against the edge of the rock with the swaying of the water had broken in two, could not now be told, but—the boat was gone, had drifted neither knew whither—there was no sign of her as they strained their eyes across the sea.

CHAPTER X.

An inch from Death's black fingers thrust
To lock you,—*In a Gondola.*

A MILE of pitiless cliff on either hand, and the sea surging in faster and faster. Whatever fear there was, neither showed or spoke it. 'We must get on as quickly as we can,' was all Honor said.

They hastened along; but it was difficult to proceed rapidly, scrambling up and down those slippery rocks, whose thick growth of seaweed and mussels told how short a time in the day they knew sun and air. Far above Honor's and Nugent's heads was the high-water mark of

the cliffs, and Stephen's heart beat faster as he noted the inroads of the water. Alone he might have struggled to swim round to the place by which he had descended the cliff; though, with so strong a tide, his chance of success would have been small, but Honor——

‘Can you swim?’ he asked with a vain hope. She shook her head.

‘Not far,’ she answered; ‘and not against these waves.’

Then he knew if they did not succeed in racing the tide, it meant death.

He wondered if Honor realised how near that silent and awful presence was: looking at her, he saw she did; knew, too, that she had no fear. The quick glance between their eyes spoke all; a new courage, a power to fight for her swelled

up in his soul, and they pressed forward, till after a quarter of a mile's toilsome scrambling, they stood at the point of which Honor had spoken. There came over Nugent a bitterest sinking of the heart, with the sense of how his feeling for Honor mocked him. His helplessness to save her faced him with that tossing fury and foam of angry waters roaring up to the cliff, lashed by the rocks among and around which they rushed and whirled and sprang as in a mad carmagnole to their own voice.

Nugent turned to Honor: 'We must try to get across,' he said.

'I don't think I can;' she showed no sign of fear, except the new-born whiteness of her face; 'I will try,' she added.

'You cannot do it alone,' said Nugent. 'You must let me help you, so' (putting

his arm round her waist), 'keep tight hold of my arm.'

One step into the water, which struck with a salt chill, and the foam of the breaking waves surged up to Honor's breast. Instinctively he felt her shrink, but his arm upheld her, and he said with all the cheerfulness he could muster—

'Think you are bathing, and that it is only fun; we will beat the sea yet.'

She gazed up at him with a dumb terror and pain, which yet was not personal dread, and they strove on against the water, clutching for support to the crags, and often being dashed against them so violently, that Nugent half feared they would never gain the wide, flat table of rock, at the other side of the cove, which was their present goal, and which, when reached,

could be but a moment's halting-place. The blinding and stunning crash of a great wave, followed swiftly by another, swept over their heads, and he felt Honor snatched from him by its force; then he knew he had her again, held in a close embrace and saved—for that moment, at least.

But she, breathless and dazed by the shock of water, gasped out, as he fought on with her to the nearest rock, 'Leave me, you can't save me, and you can swim yourself—oh, go!'

The cry of passion and pain in her voice gave him strength; her cry told something which made death with her gladness, and life the dearest heaven. 'We shall do it,' he said; 'never fear!' Yet as wave after wave broke over them, and Honor's power of striving failed her, he doubted

his own words ; a wilder whirl than before seized them again, lifting them off their feet, but this time he knew he held Honor still, even if in death ; then, that the rush of the breaker had borne them in along with itself, and left them clinging to the foot of the rock they had been striving to reach. Stunned and confused as he was, still himself, he dragged Honor up to the wide ledge above, out of the grasp of the next wave. She was well-nigh exhausted, the drenched hair and soaked dripping garments clinging to her heavily, her eyes still blinded by the salt water, her breath coming in quick, faint pants. But as he spoke to her, Nugent saw a faint tinge of colour come to her cheeks. ‘ You are better now,’ he said, ‘ and we are safe for a while.’

Yes, but for how long? Beyond this rock where they stood, the tide had reached the cliffs, as far as eye could see. Further progress was impossible. Two or three hours might pass ere the sea rose over this spot, but the fringe of weed which denoted high-water mark was full four feet above their heads, and above that, again, grew the tufts of sea-thrift and samphire, looking down in their passionless safety on this man and woman, whose youth and strength were as an idle jest, in the face of this near peril. As the far-stretching waste of waters met her sight, a low bitter cry escaped her, a strange agony borne in its despair, as she dropped down, half kneeling, half crouching on the rock, as though the fulness of their evil plight had overpowered her, drowning and be-

wildering both body and soul, as the salt water had done a few minutes since.

‘Honor, Honor, my child! Don’t break down so. It isn’t as bad as that yet.’

He hardly knew the manner or drift of his words, but they roused her; she dashed the dank hair from her face, raised to his as with a defiance of fear and death which mingled with the anguish of her words.

‘It is not that—but it was my fault the boat got loose, and I have killed you—killed you. Why didn’t you try to save yourself? It wouldn’t have been so dreadful then, but now——Oh, God help us! Does He never hear?’

Her wild, imploring gaze turned, as to meet whatever power there might be to send help; but all that met her was the cold aloofness of the sky, the cruel rising

waste of the waves. And yet, the very utterance of that helpless cry seemed to bring a faith in an Unseen Strength, with a power of endurance, even as the rush of tears flooded her eyes and choked her voice, and the stifled words 'Forgive me!' uttered brokenly, caught Nugent's ear, and pierced his heart.

'Forgive you! What do you mean?' His hand closed over hers that were so tightly clasped, and he felt how they shook with each throb of her tears' passion. All his love rose within him, mighty to speak in this last hour. 'Honor, don't you know I'm glad to die with you—if I cannot save you? That is the bitterness.'

Her gaze met his, and he saw she read his meaning, and his heart saw too, under her questioning, doubtful look, the dawn

of an answering fire to that which burned within his own soul, and he cried—

‘Dear, if we must die, let me love you this little while!’

She knew then what this friendship had meant. As a direct impulse, it flashed upon her, strong and terrible as the hungry sea, and found utterance through her lips:

‘Love!’

A fierce short struggle tightened her mouth and bent her brow, as if she resisted a new passion within her; and he, a strange, mad hope filling his soul, forgot the nearness of the end, as he heard her falter—

‘I can’t help it, and it would be no good.’
Then her voice gathered strength.

‘Would it make you happy?’ she questioned, as in a delirium, half sobbing, half glad. ‘If you love me, it is easy now.’

His arms were round her, his lips pressed to hers that yielded, then parted with a cry, as she drew back from him.

‘Don’t!’ she said imploringly. ‘Keep me, don’t let me be afraid at the end; but not so!’

He understood something of her feeling, and his close clasp relaxed. The arm still held her, but only as yielding such poor help and comfort as was possible in this hour, such as her brother might have given; and so, with all the old self-reliance gone, she clung to him. It did not hurt him that Honor shrank from his kiss; the wonder was his love had met with any response. As he looked at the pale face so near to him, he thought he had never seen it so young—almost like a child’s, for all its womanly beauty—with

the piteous lips and tender trusting eyes he had once thought hard and defiant. It was too bitter that death should claim her, his darling, whom he had won the right to love. The longing for life, hers and his, rose desperately within him, as his gaze sought that grey trembling sea. Suddenly he started, staring eagerly across the waters. Honor's gaze following his saw the sail of a fishing-boat, white like a gull against the deep-hued waters, and rounding the coast some distance from them. Nugent put his hand to his mouth and shouted, but felt how his voice, even aided by Honor's clear, vibrant cry, was carried helplessly away landwards. The girl's eyes had dilated, her breath came quickly from her panting lips, and, chilled and soaked as she was, a flush rose to her face, then

faded away as this new hope died within her, and she sobbed—

‘It will never see us.’

Nugent turned to her, a new light on his face.

‘It shall,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid, Honor;’ and this time he overbore her, and her lips met his, as though seeking strength for death. A moment, and then she knew he had gone from her side—whither?

She swayed to and fro as dizzy, and turned to seek him, only to see him again breasting the plunging waters, below. His coat lay at the foot of the rock, and she understood he had seized the one faint chance of saving both their lives, by trying to swim out to the fishing-boat, which

appeared to her excited fancy to grow further off each instant.

‘Oh, come back!’ she sobbed, stretching out wide, wild arms, as to call him back from that vast, horrible sea. ‘Oh God, save him! I love him so!’ All her life seemed in that life which her carelessness had endangered. Would he ever reach the boat? Would the men never see him? And she—she could do nothing but strain her eyes, till their strings almost cracked in her intense watching of his effort, as he climbed with the climbing waves. He would never do it. She covered her face in misery, as she lost sight of his head, and scarcely dared to look up again. When she did, the boat was tacking; they had seen him, and her lips moved dumbly.

A mist and dizziness came over her;

the sound of the sea surged into thunder in her ears; her only sense was a dim agony of relief. She did not faint, but her spent strength failed all at once; her drenched clothes struck chill about her. She did not see the rope thrown out to Stephen from the boat: was only half conscious, when the boat was near her, that he lifted her in, the words 'Thank God, you are saved!' breaking from his lips.

CHAPTER XI.

You'll love me yet, and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing.—*Pippa Passes.*

SHE was on board the boat, standing near where Stephen was leaning against the bows, wrapped in a coat belonging to the boat's owner, a weather-beaten, straight-featured fisherman who, with his grandson, a lad of about sixteen, composed her crew.

'I am fated to meet you in strange guises,' said Nugent, smiling at Honor, with the happiness which was the gift of that strange, stormy baptism of their love.

But no smile answered him. What did

it mean, this stern and absolute despair, which her face had never worn on the rock, but which fixed its features now? Stephen chid himself for his wonder; she was exhausted, overwrought; and perhaps, now that life was won back, would have recalled the avowal which had made death soft to him. He could trust and wait now. He could not see her face, it was turned away from him, as she watched the fisherman and the boy, while they turned the boat and drove straight onward to Trebarva, before the wind.

‘It was a narrow shave, sir,’ said the old man. ‘If Ben hadn’t seen you when he did, you’d scarce ’a been able to reach us; not but you’re a good swimmer and a strong. It’s as much as I’d ’a ventured on, when I was young.’

‘Do you come from Lunion or Carnwith?’ asked Nugent.

‘No, sir; we’re from the other side of the coast. She’s a Newlyn boat, as you might tell from her build;’ the hereditary pride in his craft was mingled with a certain wonder at the ignorance shown in the young man’s query. ‘You’ll need something though, sir, to keep off the chill, or you’ll find yourself chattering like a magpie—and the lady too.—Where’s the whiskey, Ben?’ he asked his grandson, who, since the moment he had espied Stephen swimming towards the boat, had been in a state of open-mouthed amazement, which seemed partly to paralyse his faculties, so that he did all his grandfather’s biddings as though he were sleep-walking, his eyes fixed on Stephen and Honor the while.

‘Thank you,’ said Stephen. He poured out a very small dram from the stone bottle Ben handed him, and gave it to Honor. ‘It will do you good,’ he said.

She lifted her heavy eyes and shook her head: ‘I can’t!’ she answered.

‘Nonsense! You are trembling from cold. Please drink it. That is right,’ as she obeyed him. ‘There, you feel better now,’ as some colour came back to her lips, pale and chill.

‘Yes.’ She made an effort to speak, as though her utterance were choked, rendering speech difficult. ‘Don’t come to Trebarva with me now,’ she said. ‘I—come to-morrow—I must see you then.’

‘As you will,’ he answered, determined not to appear exacting, or wishful for more than she was willing to give. He under-

stood what a dream that terrible hour of struggle must be to her, as it was to him now—although, to him, the deep rapture seemed to drown the pain—and he felt she might well be loth to realise what she had owned then, in the face of death.

A short while and they reached the little cove, whence Honor had but a few hours ago launched her boat. The fishing-boat, for fear of running aground, could not come within some yards from the shore. ‘I must carry you to land,’ Stephen said.

She assented mutely, and stretched out her hand in thanks and farewell to the old fisherman and then to Ben, who appeared afraid to take it.

‘Thank the Lord, miss,’ said his grandfather, ‘that your pretty head isn’t asleep

under the water this night; and always make a reef-knot when you moor a boat.' He had learnt how the accident happened, but not through whose fault, and Ben spoke out, as stolidly resenting the charge against Honor.

'The gentleman didn't say as miss did it.'

'Ah, but I know'd it's only a woman would tie up a boat with a slip-knot. Have a care, sir, how you get over her side. 'All right,' as Stephen, standing below, in the surf, stretched out his arms to take Honor and carried her to shore.

'We'll take you back to Lynion now, sir,' the old man called out to Nugent, as he stood on the beach, watching Honor, as she climbed up the steep with weary, lingering steps. 'Strange,' Nugent thought,

as he returned to the boat. The look of her eyes, as they parted, haunted him : it was like a smothered sob.

Ben and his grandfather had, after the fashion of their kind, begun a hymn. It mingled, with more volume than could have been expected, with the keen dash of the waves round the boat, the sound of the wind in the sails, the boy's clear, metallic tenor being supported by the second of the old man, perfectly true and resonant, and upborne by the strange earnestness that gives the singing of the Cornish fishermen its own peculiar charm ; and so the words struck Nugent's ears.

Most Holy Spirit, who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude ;
Who bidst the angry tumult cease,
And giv'st for wild confusion, peace—
Oh, hear us, when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea !

CHAPTER XII.

Le mystère de l'existence c'est le rapport de nos erreurs avec nos peines.—MDME. DE STAEL.

A DREARY day, with the gulls flying low over leaden waves touched with sullen white; a clouded sky, under which the purple of the heather was like a heavy blood-stain soaking into the moors, and the grey walls of Trebarva showed each weather-mark and orange lichen-stain, as scars of ancient fight.

But no aspect of sea or sky could have quenched the gladness of Stephen Nugent's heart, as he sped along the coast-guard's path, marked by the white stones set, from time to time, on the slopes above

the cliffs. Honor loved him, he knew that now, despite the apparent coldness of her manner. Her words had told him so; and her eyes had spoken passionately and purely—love.

He had been little good to the world or himself till this time; but now, was he not able to dare all, fight all, vanquish all, with her by him? His thoughts, outstripping his steps, saw her, as she would meet him, beautiful—how beautiful!—in her youth, a new sweet shyness softening her proud eyes and mouth; and this vision of her face absorbed him, till he reached Trebarva.

The parlour was empty when he entered it, but Honor had heard his step from above. A minute or two, and the door opened and she stood before

him. He started forward, then stopped, alarmed.

She wore the soft white dress he had loved to see her in, a few evenings ago ; but now the yellow lace at the throat served only to show the pallor of her face, the heavy lids of the eyes, swollen as by sleeplessness and tears, the drooped yet tightened lines of the mouth. Her very gait was altered ; it was dragging and slow. This was no girl, but a woman with a long heritage of pain, in that desolate aching glance which pleaded dumbly for comfort, while forbidding Nugent to offer it.

‘I told you to come,’ she said, ‘because—because——’

He would put his fate to the touch, let the cost be what it might.

‘Because I love you, Honor, and you

love me. You said so yesterday, when you must have spoken the truth. You would not have cheated me in death.'

'No, but then I thought there was no hope—that we must die—— Her voice was a long wail of pain, and his heart grew sick within him.

'And now?—don't torture me,' he spoke almost roughly.

'I must tell you; but don't be too angry with me. You would make me like you,' she went on, half pleading, half defiant too. 'I tried not, but it was very hard, and each time you were kind, I felt it was so good to have a friend. You know'—passionately—'I did all to prevent your being friends with me: I hated your coming, I hated liking you—though I never thought——'

‘Honor, what is it? What is it?’

‘Only you can’t judge me’—he judge her, good God!—‘You don’t know what life is here; one day grinding on after another, and to know it must be the same to the end: oh, can’t you think? Then, when you came, I was frightened, I did not know why, but—I felt it was not safe. I didn’t dream I could care for you, or you for me, this way; only I knew that when you were gone, it would be worse than before, and so, if I were wise, I would not let any pleasantness come. Oh, why did you care for me!’

At the wild outstretching appeal of her hands, his own caught them and held them closely prisoned against his breast, and his words seemed as an echo of her own passion.

‘You couldn’t help my loving you, Honor: I loved you from the moment I saw you coming across the moor.’

‘You did not know,’ she said, half sobbing: ‘there is nothing in me to love. Did I love you too?’—her eyes questioned him. ‘I thought of you always, and was angry with myself for being rude, and angrier when I was not; but I only thought we were friends—and so—and so, it went on.’

No tears came, and she struggled with herself till the sobs were under mastery; then drew her hands away from Stephen’s grasp and continued, not as before wildly and extenuatingly, at broken gasps, but as one who has learned a lesson, and a hard one, by rote:

‘I must tell you—I wanted to do so

very often—on that evening when you asked me why I worked at mathematics, but I couldn't—and now it is my punishment and I must; I have said so all through the night. Oh!'—and now the tears flooded her voice and eyes—'if I had died yesterday, with you, and you had never known——'

She was half kneeling on the sofa, her face hidden; he could only see how her frame was shaking and trembling, how her hands clenched closer and closer, as though the poor girl sought to strengthen herself by the bitter tightening of the fingers on the palms. All his heart went forth to meet her cry, while he felt her so far from him, in her desolate removedness of pain.

'Nothing can change me!'—he could say no more; her pain and shame were his, his faith in her was his own.

‘Nothing,’ at last she answered, ‘but this—— Don’t look at me! I can bear you to hear me, but that is all——’

There was a silence in the room, till the next words broke it, like a knell on Nugent’s ear, albeit the tone of her voice, the anguish of her eyes, told innocence of any shame or sin such as her words might have been supposed to imply.

‘I am married. I left my husband, —oh, I can’t tell you—you couldn’t understand.’

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh dissembling courtesy ! how fine this tyrant
Can tickle, where she wounds !—*Cymbeline*.

No, he could not understand, nor could she tell him. How should a man comprehend the passionate revolt by which a girl had striven to escape from the wreck of young life and hope, which her own fault had brought upon her, which had led her to this wild coast, where she might rest untracked, with the one woman who loved and pitied her, and under whose name she had sheltered herself?

Mrs. Ross had been her governess, when she, Honor Denne, the motherless, only

child of a rich man, had been a wilful, untamed little girl, imperious and affectionate, and clinging to her governess with the strength of a nature which found few other outlets of feeling. Mr. Denne, M.P., was an active, ambitious man, spending little time at his house in Dorsetshire, and, when at home, too absorbed in the work which followed him, to devote much leisure to his daughter. Sometimes Honor rode with him through the leafy lanes and out along the wide white roads, between the corn-fields and the sweet meadow-land; and in the evening, when he had dined, she came in to him, a tall, slim figure in her white frock, with that indefinite charm and promise of coming womanhood which is sometimes the lovely dower of maidens of her age. Then Mr. Denne would realise

that Honor would be a beautiful woman—he was fond of his child, and meant when he was less busy and she was older, to see more of her, to make her his companion—though not as her mother had been; that could not be—— Ah, if she had but lived !’

In the meantime he left Honor growing apace like a flower, under sun and rain, among the Dorsetshire woods and fields, while he went up to London and the session. Her life was a happy one, as free as a girl’s could well be; perhaps too untrammelled for a maiden of her age, whose virtues did not include self-control. She was Mrs. Ross’s darling; and if she was rather her governess’s ruler than Mrs. Ross was hers, neither of them was aware of it. The gentle lady, with her head full of

cuneiform inscriptions, was a tender and loving friend to the motherless girl, if not a severe mentor, and Honor Denne grew up wayward, true, and ardent—her nature ungoverned, though not unchecked—for all life brings some discipline—into a damsel of fourteen, whose gracious slenderness and unconscious pride of beauty were no longer only a promise. She was child and woman at once, and the continual contact with Mrs. Ross's studious life had given her an odd touch of out-of-the-way learning she would otherwise have lacked, for books were neglected in the life around her—this good life of riding and rambling and gardening, skating in winter and bathing in summer, in the clear, deep trout stream running through the grounds of Sheldon.

Then one day came strange news—in two letters, one to Mrs. Ross, one to Honor—Mr. Denne was engaged, and about to be married to a Miss Rainforth. It seemed to the child, as she read it, that a great cloud had suddenly blotted out the sunlight for ever. But of what use was the angry, impotent misery that had for its centre the instinct that now she would never know her father better, as she had thought she would do some day? Oh! she hated this woman—she could not help it, nor did she try to do so.

But she hated her a thousand times more when Mr. Denne came down to Sheldon to make arrangements for his new life, and so the full force of the blow broke upon Honor. He and his wife would live the greater part of the year in London, and

Norah, as he always called his daughter, would, of course, be with them. To a child who had spent all her life in the country, there was a certain excitement in this announcement—she had never experienced the monotonous prison of a London schoolroom, or the dulness of the formal walks and dismal trots that would replace her free rambles and rides—all this was yet in the future.

But when the fact broke on her and Mrs. Ross, that they would be separated, Mr. Denne's grave courtesy and gratitude and regrets for the necessity, as he informed Mrs. Ross of the fact, had no virtue in them to soothe her sorrow, still less to still the tumult of grief and love and indignation through which all Honor's nature seemed fused in one wretched sense of her power-

lessness to help this fate which was crushing her.

‘But, dear,’ said Mrs. Ross, between her own tears, ‘your father is quite right; Mrs. Denne will wish to have you with her’—the girl’s eyes lit into angry grey fire—‘and you need masters and classes, as Mr. Denne says. I am not wanted now.’ Her voice quivered, and she broke down.

But Honor did not cry; she was too resentful against her father to soften into tears. She felt in her soul it was cruelly unfair and ungrateful to the friend who had filled her mother’s place to her so long, and was bitterly indignant with the woman who was the cause of this wrong.

‘And what will you do?’ she asked at last, lifting her brooding eyes to Mrs. Ross’s face.

‘I thought of that last night. My brother is always writing to persuade me to go and live with him at the old home, Trebarva. He is all alone there now, but I never could have left you willingly.’

Honor knew well of that grey house set against the sea, amidst the leagues of purple heather. She had heard, often enough, the story of Mrs. Ross’s childhood and youth spent there, and how it ended when she married the young curate who, for three months, had taken the duty of the incumbent nearest to Trebarva, the vicar of three or four church towns, each consisting of a tiny church and two or three cottages; an innocent pluralist, whose whole income was not above two hundred pounds.

Mr. Ross had taken his wife far away

from Trebarva to the quiet Berkshire village where his work was set, and since then she had only seen the place twice, once in the early days of her widowhood, once during a summer holiday, when Mr. Denne, for a wonder, had taken Honor on a short visit to some relations in the North. Unconsciously she had lent a glamour to her descriptions of the place; and Trebarva, with its stern loneliness, its summer glory of heath and ling, its deep blue sea and great many-hued serpentine crags, was a romance to Honor. At this moment her heart beat fast with an intense longing to leave this life, her father and his new wife, and throw in her lot with that of Mary Ross.

And the yearning found expression in a vague pledging of the future.

‘I shall come to you some day and live there with you, if you will let me.’

The elder woman smiled. ‘Mr. Denne may object,’ she said. ‘You would be very dull. Trebarva isn’t like Sheldon!’

‘As if I were ever dull with you!’

‘Or with anyone: but you don’t know much of life yet, dear, or expect much; when you do——’

‘I shall come,’ put in the girl, her assertion growing positive under contradiction; and when, later on, the new facts of her life galled her unexpectedly, and the want of Mrs. Ross’s tender affection caused her sharp pangs of loneliness, there would return the thought of Trebarva, as a haven, till it assumed the tenacity of a fixed idea.

This was not at first. In spite of Honor's indignation, she dared not resist her father, when he told her she was to accompany him to Miss Rainforth's home, to stay there and be a bridesmaid. He thought this arrangement, which was the expressed wish of his future wife, showed a sweetness and wish to strengthen all the ties of their future life, which made him more in love with her than ever. Honor herself, with the quick delight in beauty which was an instinct of her nature, felt her own bitterness and anger melt away at the first vision of the exquisite creature with fair ruffled hair, in a sweet disorder above her loadstar eyes and bewitching smile, who stretched out her hands to her half beseechingly as she said, 'Love me a little, if you can;' and the girl's

generous nature felt a quick remorse as she sealed with a kiss her impulsive 'I do.'

But though Miss Rainforth played her part very prettily, none the less was that first sight of Honor a shock to her, and one from which she did not at once recover. Mr. Denne had told her Honor was twelve or thirteen, and she had imagined a child; but this tall, slim girl, still unformed, but with the dawn flush of beauty giving her the charm

Which sets

The budding rose above the rose full blown—

albeit not yet a woman, would soon be one, and a grown-up step-daughter—not a fact which had entered into Miss Rainforth's theory of her future life, for some years to come. It faced her now as a near reality,

and quickened an ignoble grudge which she had already conceived against poor Honor, without any fault on the girl's part.

Agnes Rainforth was one of those women whose affections can apparently find no object worthy their devotion among human kind, and so fix themselves with the more tenacity on inanimate objects. Miss Rainforth had never been troubled by that feeling which surely brings the heartache to those who know it—the blind unreasoning love for man or woman; but her father and her mother felt no lack in her, and if her sisters and her brother regarded Agnes's marriage as a loss to them which was a gain, they kept their conviction secret, and were only inwardly amazed and amused at the blindness of a man who could think

Agnes cared one straw for anybody but herself.

But if she did not care for people, it by no means followed she was without affection; to gain the objects whereof she had an inexhaustible store of well-coined pinchbeck, with which she could traffic with those otherwise uninteresting human beings who could give her what she needed. She never knew herself how little men and women meant to her; and when, at twenty-six, she accepted, with an intense relief, the release from the struggle after the good she cared for, hampered, as she had been, by a small allowance and four younger sisters, she quite imagined it was Mr. Denne she loved, not his large income or his rising reputation in the House. Her lover's grave dignity of look and manner, his old family,

his courteous tenderness to her, all satisfied her vanity, so that her flattered self-esteem made so good a semblance of love on her part as deceived even herself.

After all these weary years of plotting and planning, of mending gloves and re-fashioning dresses, with a scanty share of help from the one maid, who was well exercised in the service of Mrs. Rainforth and her five daughters, after the struggle and the constant endeavour to shine down other women with far more money than herself, and to make 50*l.* a year do the work of 150*l.*, it was sweet to Agnes to think these hateful days were over for ever. Dress was her one constant interest in life, both as a pursuit and a means by which her vanity could be gratified; and allied to this primary affection was an offshoot therefrom, which

had only not grown into a passion from her inability, till now, to indulge it in the smallest degree — a yearning after jewels.

This was likely to be gratified now ; already, when Honor arrived on her visit to her future step-mother, Miss Rainforth's toilette table bore many dainty morocco and russia leather cases, the contents of which, three months ago, would have sufficed for her entire happiness for the time—yet here was the crumpled rose-leaf she was powerless to smooth.

The Rainforths were old acquaintances of Mr. Denne's, though till this summer he had seen little of them, since his first wife's death ; and when he had met Agnes Rainforth this year, had been half surprised into love, by discovering how fair

the child, he only vaguely remembered, had grown. But Agnes herself had a vivid recollection of a time, twelve years before, when Mr. and Mrs. Denne had come down to stay with the Rainforths for a week, and she, a girl of fourteen—Honor's present age—had lingered in her mother's dressing-room the evening of a county ball, envious of the two girls who were staying in the house to go to this dance, under Mrs. Rainforth's wing.

As they gathered ready dressed, in her mother's dressing-room, she hated the contrast between her own dingy claret merino with its bibbed holland apron, her tightly plaited fair hair hanging in two tails down her back, and those elder maidens' radiant whiteness of satin and tulle. Agnes knew she was far prettier

really than they were, and it was hateful not to look so. She was noticing how red Emily Clinton's arms were, when the dressing-room door opened again and Mrs. Denne appeared.

Even now Agnes could remember every detail of the picture she made—this other woman whose place she was now to fill—standing in the soft light of the shaded candles and the glow of the fire. She was all in white, the tracery of rare old lace giving richness to her satin and brocade; her dark hair was swept up in one coil at the top of her head, above the pale beautiful face; and on the front of her dress and starring her hair, winding round her arms and shining on her neck and shoulders, like streams of glittering water, diamonds flashed and dazzled into light.

Mrs Rainforth turned round with an exclamation of delight and surprise.

‘How good of you,’ she said, ‘to put them on! I wanted to see them so.’

‘A penny peep-show,’ answered Mrs. Denne, and her voice was very sweet and low—‘but Arthur likes me to wear them.’

‘They must be very valuable,’ said Mrs. Rainforth, remembering the cost of her one or two small brooches, the light of which had waned before Mrs. Denne’s radiance.

‘Yes; but you know they were my share of my uncle’s property; he left all else to my brother. I always told Arthur it was a shame they should be so useless to him; but he likes them, so it doesn’t matter.’

All this Agnes neither understood nor cared about; but the dazzle of those diamonds remained with her as a memory for ever; and had been an unconscious factor in the shy, soft gladness of the murmur with which her head sank on to Mr. Denne's shoulder as he gathered her into his arms, thanking her with a fervent kiss, for promising to fill the blank in his life with her youth and grace and sweetness—to be his wife and a mother to his child.

‘Though you will be more like her elder sister,’ he added tenderly.

Some time afterwards he brought her as an offering a diamond star, beautiful but solitary; and, as she delighted over it, taking it to be the herald of its brethren, she remembered so well he said—

‘Are you fond of diamonds? I wish I had some like Honor’s for you!’

A sick chill of disappointment struck through her. ‘Honor’s?’ she questioned.

‘Yes; my wife’s—that her uncle left her—they were entailed on her child.’ Agnes mustered sufficient self-control to ask lightly—

‘Are they very wonderful?’

‘They are rather fine, and if Honor has no taste for them, which is hardly likely, they would realise a small fortune. They are worth about eight or nine thousand, which is pretty well for a young woman in her state of life.’

Her jealous heart cried silently, ‘They ought to be mine;’ but she only asked—

‘When will she have them?’

‘Not till she is twenty-one, unless she

marries.' Agnes wondered if she might not at least have the enjoyment of them for some years; but Mr. Denne's next words dissipated this illusion. 'They are not in my keeping, but in that of her mother's trustees. What are you thinking of, Agnes?' he asked jestingly, admiring the sweet pensiveness of her fair oval face, bent over his gift. 'Are you afraid your new daughter will shine you down?'

He had hit the mark without knowing it, for that hour had sown the germ of a bitter, jealous dislike to Honor in Miss Rainforth's mind.

Yet, as step-mother, no fault could be found with her. True, directly she returned with her husband from their wedding journey, at the end of a dull October day, to the new house in Bryan-

ston Square, where Honor was waiting them, she ground down the girl's life into almost an exaggeration of the usual formal schoolroom routine; but then, as she said, the poor child had been allowed to run so wild that this was necessary, and her manner to Honor was always sweet and caressing, even while she bound her every hour to a burden of duties and studies, masters and dull walks with a daily governess; whose chief duty was to superintend Honor's actions, and see that she duly prepared the succession of exercises and studies demanded by one master and another.

‘I feel like a tyrant,’ moaned Agnes to her husband. ‘But you don't know how much she needs, and she has so little time now in which to make up for all she has

lost ; besides, she is quite undisciplined—she has never learned to obey.’

So Honor sickened and wearied of her life in the dull back room appointed as schoolroom, with the rare relaxation of a drive with Agnes now and then in the afternoon ; or of an hour spent in the drawing-room after dinner, if Mr. and Mrs. Denne were alone and not going out in the evening. She saw less of her father than she had ever done ; and though, with her straightforward heart-honesty, the girl believed her step-mother had only set her into this dull monotony of life, which Honor saw was much the same as was led by most of the girls of her age around her, because she thought it needful, still when Mrs. Denne would come softly into the schoolroom, and putting her arm round

Honor's neck, as she sat with flushed face and puzzled brows over a stiff German translation, would murmur, 'Poor little girl, it does seem hard on you,' the girl's memory would go back to Sheldon with a rush of longing. She almost panted for the cool shadow of the trees and the light and sound of the stream, for Mrs. Ross's voice, for liberty and affection: how sorely she longed for these, none could know.

Mrs. Denne was right on one point; Honor never had learnt obedience: it was a question if she were learning it now. A year went on; the Dennes were back at Sheldon, and Honor was enjoying a faint shadow of her old life—sadly marred by the constant companionship of a German governess, prone to a guttural enthusiasm over the æsthetic symbolism of nature—

when Agnes's baby came and proved to be a boy, to Mr. Denne's intense satisfaction and his wife's secret triumph. Honor would not inherit Sheldon now.

Mrs. Denne betrayed herself unwittingly to her step-daughter, on the day the girl first came into her room after the baby's birth with a bunch of autumn violets in her hand, which she laid on the pillow, by Agnes's pale, pretty head.

'Thank you, darling, how sweet of you!' said Mrs. Denne; then, with a languid movement of the head, 'Nurse, show Miss Denne her brother.'

A small bundle of snowy flannels, from which peeped out an exceedingly red tiny face, puckered up as though about to sneeze or cry, was laid in Honor's arms, and she held it a little awkwardly. She had

never liked babies, but this small thing was so helpless and strange to her, that a new womanly instinct of pity and protection and tenderness stirred within her which made her intense eyes almost fateful in their depth. Agnes misunderstood them; her superficial tact led her wrong; and reading Honor's nature by her own, she said with a smile, 'You are not angry with him for taking your place?'

Honor did not understand at once; then a light broke in on her, illuming more facts than one; she looked straight at her step-mother, surprised and hurt, with something like scorn underlying her astonishment. 'No,' she answered, her voice vibrating. Agnes saw she had made a mistake, and she shrunk back from that clear, piercing glance, with a new dislike.

‘I knew you were too generous, dear,’ she said; but that did not heal Honor’s pride at being suspected of a baseness which had no part in her.

Six months later, Mr. and Mrs. Denne had taken advantage of the Whitsuntide recess to go on a week’s visit to Paris, and Honor was using one of the mornings of her brief Whitsun holiday to scribble a lengthy, rambling, untidy letter to Mrs. Ross, far away at that unknown Trebarva, when she was interrupted by a telegram from Paris.

Mr. Denne was dead; had died of diphtheria; was to be buried in Paris. Honor’s grief stunned her; she had clung to her father more than she had ever shown. It must be untrue! life could not be cruel and leave her so utterly alone.

There was no one who felt much for the poor child in her misery. Agnes, widowed so early, with her throat white against the blackness of her weeds, and the yellow of her hair gleaming through the long misty head-dress, more like maiden's veil than widow's cap, sat with her baby in her arms, in the dim light of her boudoir, and quickly and irresistibly touched the hearts of all who saw her thus. One person who, perhaps, did not feel the pathos and picturesqueness of Mrs. Denne's pose and attire was her younger sister, Theo Rainforth, who had come up from the country with her mother in answer to Agnes' summons, and who, while Mrs. Rainforth and her elder daughter cried in company, sat by them, impassive and apparently unsympathising.

‘Of course she is very sorry to lose him,’ ran her thoughts; ‘he gave her everything she wanted, and was kind and good-looking, and always telling her, in one way or another, how charming she was. She must miss him dreadfully, but it won’t be for long.’

‘Where’s Honor?’ Theo asked bluntly, as Mrs. Denne, after a gush of tears, stretched forth her hand to her, and murmured, with a faint smile quivering on her lips, that it was ‘so good of her to come with mamma.’

‘I don’t know,’ responded Agnes; ‘I saw her this morning. She suffers very much, poor dear, and can’t bear to see my sorrow. I fancy she is a little jealous of it; but that is natural—I love her for having loved her father.’

‘I will go and find her,’ said Miss Rainforth; and Agnes, as Theo left the room, reflected as she had done once or twice before on her sister’s coldness.

Theo went straight to the schoolroom, where she found Honor—asleep. The fire had burned low, and on the rug, before it, lay the girl, at full length, her head thrown back and resting on a footstool. Her rich-hued hair was tossed and disordered; her thick black gown, with its heavy folds of crape, lacked, for all its newness, the freshness which marked Agnes’s yet more sombre garb.

Miss Rainforth stood looking at her, loth to awake her, and with a gentle sympathy in her face Mrs. Denne’s grief had not called there. ‘How handsome she is, even like this!’ she thought; ‘and

how jealous Agnes will be of her in two or three years!' Theo had had experience of this phase of her sister's nature.

She was turning softly away, when Honor woke with a start; but on seeing Theo, a momentary gladness crossed her face. She did not know much of her, but there was a truth of nature in Theo which Honor's own truth answered, and she was sure Theo liked her, though she wondered why.

Only she needed no pity. Even if every one were sorry for her, what good would it be? 'When did you come?' she asked.

Theo, before answering, deliberately poked the fire, swept the hearth, and then sat down by Honor. The new-born blaze

flickered cheerfully on both their faces ; then she said—

‘A little while ago ; mamma is with Agnes, and I came up here to find you. I am sorry, though, I woke you.’

‘It doesn’t matter,’ answered Honor heavily. ‘I don’t know how I dropped off ; I didn’t sleep much last night.’

‘I can see that,’ said Theo, a kindly tenderness in her voice which softened Honor.

‘You know,’ she said, ‘I forget for a minute, and then it all comes back, and I can’t cry, but it burns my eyes like fire.’

‘You have cried quite enough, you poor child. I hate tears ; Agnes is crying downstairs. Do you know what she means

to do?' She asked the question to distract Honor's mind.

'She says she shall go abroad scon to Italy or Germany, but it isn't decided yet.'

'And send you to school, I suppose?' Theo's inflection was not complimentary to Agnes.

'No, papa put in his will that I was not to go to any school; he did not like them. I think mamma means to take me with her.' She spoke drearily, listlessly, as though it mattered little to her, but Miss Rainforth had some ado to prevent a pitying shrug of her shoulder at Honor's prospects. She did not envy her the fate of being the one home companion of Agnes's widowhood in a strange land.

But in any case she saw little chance

of Honor's lot being enviable for the next few years; so she answered as cheerfully as she could, 'Well, that will be pleasanter than staying in London.'

Honor did not respond at once; then she said, with her eyes fixed on the fire-glow—

'I wish mamma would let me go to Trebarva.'

'Where on earth is that?'

'Where Mamie—Mrs. Ross—I have told you about her—lives—in Cornwall.'

'My dear child, Agnes would never hear of such a thing; you may set your heart at rest as to that. I dare say she'—
'would like it,' Miss Rainforth was nearly saying, but she checked herself and went on—'might allow it, if the world wouldn't say it was wrong of her, and that she

neglected you ; but every one would do so, and Agnes is so sure all she does is right, she wants other people to be sure of it as well. I wish I were not leaving England for so long.'

'Are you going away?' asked Honor wonderingly.

'To India ; I am engaged to be married, Honor ; I came partly to tell you, only it seemed unkind when you are so unhappy.' There was a beautiful gladness in Theo's face that made it lovely, and her voice sweet ; and to the younger girl, who had never before been face to face with this love, Theo's few words were as a revealing of something unknown and wonderful, and very far away from her. It was the first momentary glimpse of Love's paradise caught through the opening gate, a possi-

bility of life never realised before, never likely to be a living truth in her own.

‘I am glad,’ she said to Theo, with grave, awed eyes and bated breath.

CHAPTER XV.

Like Alexander I will reign,
And I will reign alone ;
My soul did evermore disdain
A rival near my throne.—MONTROSE.

So Honor went abroad with Agnes and the child ; and Theo Rainforth, now Mrs. Searle, sailed for India with her husband. She did not forget the girl, and wrote to her from time to time ; and whenever her letters arrived they were hailed by a fine smile from Mrs. Denne, and some such remark as—‘ Theo is constant still to her fancy for you, Honor. I am so glad : I have never known any of her likings last so long.’

But such speeches, only an example of

many others of the same kind about other people, did not shake Honor's faith in her friend. By this time she had gauged Agnes in some ways, and had learnt to resist her power of insinuating that no one was really and faithfully fond of Honor; if one seemed to be so it was from caprice, or kindness, or self-interest. Honor clung loyally to her faith in Theo, albeit she knew the latter's liking for her could be but a very small fact in the young wife's life. But Agnes's tactics did their work in regard to other people; the girl grew to feel herself an Ishmael, with every one's hand against her, and to think that the persons she knew were ready to say unkind things and think unkind thoughts, till with the sore, hurt pain of youth, when taught to distrust what had seemed

.

so winning and so kind, she felt, too, that her hand was against every one.

Agnes never told a deliberate untruth ; she only encouraged criticism of Honor from her crowd of dear friends and larger crowd of dear acquaintances, who, as Mrs. Denne's grief passed from sadness into tender memory, drew her back into life, and made her remember she was still young and prettier than ever. She knew many women, whose tact made them sensible that a discriminating, and of course kindly criticism of her step-daughter, would not be unwelcome to her. Such comments repeated to Honor, half laughingly, half gravely, sometimes as being absurd, sometimes as a warning, but always skilfully and delicately exaggerated, became censure under which the girl

winned; and being too proud to show her hurt, she grew *farouche*, shy and repellent.

Despite this, Mrs. Denne was aware that her step-daughter would be, nay, was, a rival near her throne, whose constant presence would gall her intolerably. Had Honor been of a meaner nature, and known how Agnes was sometimes irritated almost past bearing by some chance look or speech of friend or admirer devoted to herself, which told how beautiful the girl had grown, she might have tasted the sweets of revenge; but as it was, she only knew she was wretched.

So two years passed on, the winters spent at Florence and Rome, the summers at Homburg, the autumns at Deauville or Etretat. Agnes said it was so good for

Honor's education, ignoring the fact that she herself was freer from the trammels of widowhood abroad than she would have been at home. But now that Mrs. Denne's mourning was over, she yearned for London and her own house, for the warmth and prettiness and comfort, for which she had a cat-like affection.

She made up her mind that if, for the present, there must be bitterness mingled in her draught of life, arising from the presence of a younger and fairer woman by her side, who must in many eyes eclipse her, she would drain the cup heroically, and give no reason for people to sneer or laugh, or say that she was jealous of Honor, and kept her back. In resolving this, she felt her own magnanimity and superiority to her own idea of the race of

women, so that tears stood in her eyes as she reflected how perfectly her duty to her step-daughter had been fulfilled.

Honor should come out this year, instead of waiting till she was nineteen, as Mrs. Denne had formerly intended. She was a strange girl, poor dear, thought Agnes, and would be far happier married. A husband might understand her, as she, she owned with a sigh, could not do. Mrs. Denne's own heart, conscious of her own charm of very womanhood, which men found so exquisite, felt a soft pity for the rash man who should incline to link his life with that intractable, fearless creature, whose eyes would look a defiance of which Agnes herself was afraid; and who, lacking the arts which are instincts to some women, was scornful of them when exercised by

others. Beautiful as Honor was, would any man wed her, even with her fortune? —for Mr. Denne had provided well for his daughter, and Agnes's memory still ached jealously when she remembered those diamonds. She could see how Honor's fairness would be illumined by their white fire; yet it was no use putting off the evil day which must come, and with a supreme effort, Agnes made up her mind. One morning, as Honor entered their room in the hotel at Marseilles, where they were staying on their way to England, she smiled at her, saying, 'I have a surprise for you.'

Honor was carrying her little brother on her back, an amusement both she and the child enjoyed, but the gladness of her eyes hardened, and she unclasped Master

Lionel's tiny hands from round her neck as she said, 'Have you, mamma?'

'Don't you want to know what it is?' asked Agnes, feeling as aggrieved as the fairy godmother might have done, had Cinderella expressed no wish to go to the ball.

'You know I never can guess what you mean.' Honor scarcely intended a sarcasm; but Agnes heard in her words the presage of a future when they two would be more equally matched, woman to woman, and war would be more probable than peace between them; but she kept these things in her heart.

'You are not over-gracious, Norah,' she returned, the pique in her voice just evident, as though, after seeing her way to a concession she had thought would delight Honor, she had met with an unmerited

rebuff. 'Never mind; I only wanted to tell you I mean you to come out this spring, instead of next year. Now are you pleased, you strange girl?' She put her arm round her step-daughter's waist, looking up in her face with that winning smile which had once charmed Honor, and in which now she had no belief.

'I don't know,' was all the reply.

'The Sphinx was nothing to you,' retorted Agnes, baffled by this obstinate ingratitude and insensibility to her efforts to please. 'Perhaps you will condescend to be interested in your court dress, as it isn't a month till the May drawing-rooms. I think of pale amber for myself. That faint green-blue I love, they say will be so much worn this year—which means it will be horribly common.'

Honor made no reply; Agnes's announcement had caused her a curious thrill, though she had shown no sign thereof. So she was a woman at last! Outside in the April sunshine was the laughing spring greenness, and in the garden below, a line of jonquils were nodding their heads in the soft breeze. In the fastnesses of the leaves a nightingale was singing, singing, singing; and something in the girl trembled back an answer to the promise and passion and pain of the song, whose meaning was as yet untold to her, which might translate itself in such different ways. The song which, as Heine told us, the angels call heaven's gladness, the fiends hell's pain; while men name it—
Love!

CHAPTER XV.

Form what resolution you will, matrimony will be the end on't.—*Trip to Scarborough.*

IF Honor had really looked forward to her first season in town as the emancipation from a thousand worrying little cords by which Agnes managed to control her every action, she would have been disappointed. But the quick capacity for pleasure which was re-awakened within her by this new life only increased the irritation of her real want of freedom, the sense that she must act in every matter as Agnes willed it.

Mrs. Denne had never said to herself that a perpetual chafing against as constant a constraint would make the girl the more

eager to avail herself of the first chance of escape from her real, yet intangible thralldom; she had never even owned in thought how intense a relief to her it would be to get rid of Honor. She only vaguely assured herself that marriage would be the best thing for her husband's daughter, and her nature instinctively carried out the course of action most likely to bring about this 'consummation so devoutly to be wished,' both for Honor and herself.

It did not seem a difficult one to achieve. Agnes was surprised and piqued to find how strong an attraction for men lay in the girl, whose grey eyes looked back into theirs, untroubled and unstirred by any shadow of the feeling they would fain have awakened. Her fairness was rare enough to make its conquest and possession a

triumph; and if some men's admiration was frozen by that virginal coldness, with others it burned the more, kindling a passion no facile sweetness of look and tone would ever have awakened within them. There was one man especially for whom it had the dramatic charm of contrast, and he, Agnes saw, would be the likeliest for her purpose. He did not like her. she was as instinctively aware of that as she was that Honor, with her beauty of face and form and ignorance of her own attractions, had stirred within him a more passionate desire and resolution than had been his for years.

Honor knew nothing of this; and though the thought of him crossed her mind as, one evening, she stood before the glass in the drawing-room at Bryanston

Square, ready dressed for a large ball to which she and Agnes were going that evening, it was with no idea of the ultimate consequences which were present to Mrs. Denne's mind. She knew his step suited hers, that he liked to dance with her, and reflected with satisfaction that she was certain of enjoying at least some short part of her evening. She was altering the arrangement of the flowers on her bodice when Agnes entered, with her soft, cool, critical glance, and the girl, who had had a half-unconscious pleasure in her own fair image in the glass, felt suddenly too tall and gawky and unformed, as she noted the finished grace and air of every line of Mrs. Denne's toilette.

She had no need to be dissatisfied with herself. Her step-mother's conscience would

not have let her rest if anyone could have imputed defects in Honor's attire as being due to jealousy or neglect on her part. Miss Denne's dress was faultless—as faultless as was Agnes's own; and though Honor could not see it, the tall girlish form in its vaporous draperies of softest yellow, guiltless of ornament save for a huge bouquet of yellow azaleas, and clusters of the same blossoms nestling in the knot of hair and heightening the whiteness of the neck, eclipsed Agnes's smaller and slenderer grace, admirably set off as it was by her black lace with its jet-encrusted cuirass, and the heavy fire-red pomegranate blossoms, set like flames on her fair hair and her bodice, and fastened to her huge scarlet fan. Agnes noted Honor's flowers, but said nothing.

‘They are the two best turned-out women here,’ observed a young man in a tone of authority, as Mrs. Denne and Honor entered Lady Fenwick’s ball-room.

The man already mentioned, a little way back, who was standing by him, turned round with a not over-pleased expression, as of one who fears his preserves may be poached on.

‘Who?’ he asked, laconically and not over-amiably.

‘Why, the tall girl, you know, over there in the yellow frock. Hang it, you don’t expect a fellow to remember names! I can’t get on with her a bit, though,’ continued the youth in a somewhat aggrieved tone: ‘she has nothing in her.’

‘Think not?’ said his friend; ‘I suppose the step-mother suits you better.’

‘Rather. Now that is what I call a jolly little woman; just the right sort; dances Al and talks well, and as good as gold too. I can tell you she cuts up pretty rough, if a man tries it on, by saying anything he shouldn’t.’

‘You have tried it on, I see,’ said the other with not very caustic satire, and moving across to where Honor was talking to another lady, a pretty, sweet-looking married woman of five or six and twenty. Agnes was already waltzing; and Honor’s partner, standing by her, was engaged in the arduous task of fastening the four buttons of his glove.

Something in Miss Denne’s pure, grave gaze for a moment touched the young man, who was really in love with her in his own way, as with a breath of morning air

untainted and calm. 'By Jove,' he thought, 'I should like to see any fellow daring to try it on by saying anything he shouldn't to her. She'd make him feel small, just because she wouldn't understand it.'

'How do you do, Mrs. Strahan?' he said to the lady by Honor. 'Miss Denne,' as Honor put out her hand in greeting, 'can you let me have a dance?'

'Oh yes, my card is very blank.' She held it to him.

'Then may I take two? Thanks awfully. Number 4—that's the next—and 10.'

'Thank you,' said Honor; and then her partner, having succeeded in conquering the last refractory button, turned to her, and Mrs. Strahan being also claimed, the young man did not go further afield in search of other partners, but contented

himself with somewhat moodily watching the light untired grace of the tall and supple figure in its pale clouds of daffodil-hued tulle. 'Stacey is about right, though,' he thought; 'she is the best turned-out girl here: it isn't only that she's the best-looking one by a long way, but she's so thoroughbred. She only wants to know her own value, and then she could give them all a beating. I believe that little woman bullies her awfully.'

But Honor was far from knowing her own value, as he phrased it; perhaps it was this very fact which gave her the charm he recognised of unlikeness to the other girls around her. She was unlike, certainly, and the fierce innocence of her beauty had somewhat of the untamed wild grace of a fawn or other creature of

the woods. As she stood when the young man came up to claim her, her eyes shining, but her cheeks unflushed and her lips set calmly and proudly, he felt himself that his hour had arrived, and he was bent on having this girl for his wife.

‘I am glad you have come,’ he said. ‘It was so late, I had almost given you up. And thank you so much.’

‘What for?’ said Honor.

‘For wearing my flowers. I was rather in a funk lest they shouldn’t suit your dress; but they look very jolly; just right.’

For a moment Miss Denne looked puzzled, then a little troubled and haughty; but her simplicity stood her in as good stead as knowledge of the world would have done.

‘Was it you sent them?’ she said. ‘I thought when they were brought to me that mamma had ordered them, as she always sees to my dress, and the one thing she knows I won’t wear is artificial flowers; so she is very good, and lets me have fresh ones. It was very kind of you, and they are beautiful; but——’ she paused for a moment, the young girl’s natural pleasure in the tribute, which seems of all the most natural, struggling with the inborn pride and reserve of her nature.

‘But what? Please don’t look at me like that, or I shall think you are angry with me.’

‘No; it was very kind of you; but’—with a slight uprearing of her white neck—‘I would rather you had not.’ Her shyness made her tone cold.

‘I wish——!’ he paused. ‘Make things even,’ he said, ‘and pay me.’ There was a small spray of his gift, the yellow azaleas, which had fallen from Honor’s shoulder and was lying at their feet. He stooped and picked it up. ‘May I have it?’ he asked, feeling somewhat audacious, though with most women he would not have stopped to ask permission.

Honor was rather troubled ; she had an instinct which prompted her to forbid the appropriation of the flowers, which she alone of all the women in the room wore prominently ; but she was very young, and very shy, for all the pride of her fresh loveliness, and was horribly afraid of making a fuss over what might be a trifle, entirely in accordance with the ways of the world. Mrs. Strahan, who was standing close by

and saw the whole little scene, understood it and was amused ; yet felt a womanly tender trouble and pity for Honor, as the girl's partner flung away the pink carnation from his coat, and carefully inserted in its place the tiny cluster of honey-coloured blossoms.

‘She doesn't know what people will say, poor child,’ she thought. ‘I suppose he is in earnest ; he looks so.’

The pleasure of dancing was keen to Honor ; so keen that it had caused her two or three times before to forget or disregard Agnes's injunctions as to how often she was to dance with one man ; and it so happened that of all those whom she had met, her present partner was the most entirely satisfactory. The consequence was, that when at the end of the present waltz he

pleaded for the next, she deliberated—and was lost. ‘Do give it me,’ he pleaded. ‘It is Les Lointains. Don’t you remember, it was the same, when we found out at the Millers’ how well we went together?’

Whether this fact were invented on the spur of the moment, Honor never knew; but their steps did accord excellently well, and in the enjoyment of the perfect rhythm and movement, she grew heedless and daring of the rebuke which she knew would await her from Agnes’s dove-like eyes and voice. The instinct of rebellion had seized her; she would do what she chose, happen what might.

She acted in pursuance of this Rabelaisian motto, when the waltz came to an end, and her partner said, ‘Well! our next is number 10; that will be about

supper-time—will you be kind? You ought to, for you snubbed me horribly about those flowers.'

'How?'

'By saying it was Mrs. Denne who had thought of them, when I had taken all the trouble to remember you had a yellow frock.'

Honor laughed. 'Have you a bad memory?' she asked.

'Awfully; but you haven't answered my question.'

'You haven't asked it'—the girl felt nervous; she could not have told why.

'I want you to let me have all the extras; we needn't dance them, you know.'

'But I want to dance,' said Miss Denne in a somewhat affronted tone.

'Oh, that's all the better, then. I have

never met anyone I went so well with, except——’ the young man checked himself with alarming suddenness.

‘Except whom?’ asked Honor mechanically, as she saw her next partner, young Stacey, advancing, and consulted her card.

‘Oh, no one you ever heard of.’ The reply was slightly confused, and as Honor and Mr. Stacey moved away, her late partner heaved a sigh of relief.

‘What the devil made me say that?’ he muttered to himself. ‘However, if only she says yes, that’s all over for good;’ with which reflection he went off in search of the supper-room for a devilled sandwich and champagne.

It was scarcely to be supposed that Agnes was not watching Honor’s movements; she was noting them with a jealous

bitterness which went far to mar the sweetness of the reflection that the end she was working for—the freeing herself of Honor—was on a fair way to be obtained. The young man, whose devotion to her step-daughter had been noted before to-night, was so entirely desirable in the eyes of many women, that Mrs. Denne felt it was hard Honor should monopolise him. He was very well off, well-born and good-looking, and Agnes felt that fate had dealt unfairly by her.

Still the dock leaf grew near the nettle. Her own approving conscience, if Honor made such a marriage in her very first season, would be strengthened by the congratulations of her friends, and the assurance that very few mothers could have attended so well to the girl's interests; and

this gave her strength to smile amiably as after supper Honor again passed her fleetly, her steps guided by the young man, whose button-hole still wore her badge of the yellow azalea.

‘Naughty child,’ observed Mrs. Denne sweetly to Mrs. Strahan. ‘I must scold her well for flirting in this way—and giving away her flowers, too!’

‘I don’t think she is flirting,’ said the other lady drily, ‘at least, when I saw them, it seemed to be all on his side; and as to the flowers, I was witness to their exchange. Miss Denne could not help it.’

‘Wait till your own girls grow up, my dear; and then you will know what an anxiety they are,’ was Agnes’s answer. ‘Honor, child,’ as Miss Denne and her

partner halted near her, 'don't you think it is nearly time for us to be going?'

'Oh, one dance more, Mrs. Denne?' pleaded the young man.

Agnes hesitated, but decided that the restrictive policy would be the wisest. It also suited best with her present mood, especially as her partner for the next waltz had, as she knew, left some time before. 'I think she has had quite enough dancing,' she answered, with a honeyed smile.

'But we may finish this?'

Mrs. Denne nodded a gay assent. 'I trust to your honour,' she said, 'to come back directly it is over.'

CHAPTER XVI.

A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine,
To pull the thorns thy brow to braid
And press the rue for wine.
A lightsome gait, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green,
No more of me you knew, my dear,
No more of me you knew.—SCOTT.

FOR all her sweetness overnight, Agnes, true to her tactics, found fault the next day with Honor for her unwitting sins against conventionalities. She chose her own time for the little lecture, waiting till after lunch, when, as she said to herself, she felt equal to it; and when the girl's cheeks were burning, ended her exordium with

‘It is better to tell you, dear; you don’t know what people say about such things.’

‘Yes, I do,’ answered Honor in a dry, bitter tone. ‘You take care, mamma, that I shall.’

Agnes sighed, the sigh of one accustomed to be misconceived, yet in patience possessing her soul. ‘It is not I,’ she said; ‘it is the world.’

‘Then what does the world matter?’ exclaimed the younger woman impetuously. ‘If it is always ready to think ill, it may—for me at least.’

‘Then you had better live on a desert island,’ returned Agnes. ‘But it is unkind of you to resent whatever I say, Norah, when all these years I have tried to bring you up as your dear father would have wished.’ The sense of Honor’s ingratitude

brought the ready tears to Mrs. Denne's eyes. 'I sometimes don't think we can go on living together, this eternal misconception is too hard to bear. I shall do my duty, but you make it a burden, not a pleasure.'

She was a little frightened at her own words, though their bearing had been long since planned. She knew the girl's pride, knew that the idea that her absence would be a relief would fire it, and that the knowledge of the three years which must pass before she was twenty-one and her own mistress would press on Honor as a heavy weight. There could be but one severance of this chain between the two women, for which neither would be blamed, and it was for this Agnes had worked.

'The victoria is here,' she said, as

she stood by the drawing-room window ;
' I am going to evening church,' with beautiful dignity. ' Will you come ?'

Honor shook her head ; she could almost have laughed, even with this wild, helpless rage in her soul, at Agnes's serene fulfilling of one of her pet duties, this half-hour service, twice a week, which was as a bloom and fragrance of piety, giving Agnes her crowning grace of sweet and reverent womanhood in an unbelieving age. Another sigh escaped Mrs. Denne at the girl's lack of any feeling akin to her own. ' I wish you would,' she said ; ' if you only knew the strength and comfort it gives—but one only learns it through sorrow. I suppose I must call for Millie Beetham, as I shall go on to the park afterwards, and I don't like being seen there alone.'

Honor, left by herself, remained passive on the sofa where she was sitting, her hands clenched, her face troubled by a new idea Agnes's words had left rankling within her. She was a fool not to have thought of this before, that Agnes would be glad to be rid of her; and the loneliness this knowledge brought was terrible.

If Mrs. Denne would only let her go to Mary Ross in Cornwall! She was alone now; her brother had died six months before, and Trebarva was hers! She had written to Honor, while the girl was still abroad, saying that, if it had not been for her work, she could not have borne the sadness and solitude. A longing to see her child, as she still sometimes called her, breathed through the whole letter, but Honor knew that Agnes would never

far relax the tight rein by which she held the girl's independence under control, as to let her go to stay alone with Mrs. Ross. She had always refused to let Honor visit anyone, relations or friends alike, without her ; with the result that every one saw Mrs. Denne's step-daughter from Mrs. Denne's own point of view. Honor had jealously guarded any mention of Mrs. Ross and Trebarva from Agnes, feeling, even in the first young days of her admiration and love of Agnes, that Mrs. Ross had been treated ungratefully by Mr. Denne, and that she could not speak on the subject without showing she thought her father in the wrong. So Mrs. Denne knew nothing of the one strong love which endured in the girl's heart, both as a memory and a future hope to which her imagination

turned whenever, as now, she felt friendless, helpless, unhappy.

But ah ! she needed present help sorely. As the longing for freedom and gladness—the gladness she felt would be so easy and natural, but which had never been hers since her father's marriage—overcame her with the passionate egoistic anger of youth, the large tears slowly welled up to her eyes. She seldom cried—but here, alone !—and then the tears came.

She felt secure, knowing that visitors were stringently interdicted in Agnes's absence ; she did not know that Mrs. Denne had given directions that afternoon that in case of one favoured guest making his appearance, he was to be told Miss Denne was at home, and that Mrs. Denne would soon return. Agnes had scarcely reckoned

on so direct a fulfilment of her plans, but fortune and a young man's passion favoured them ; and Honor raised a startled, tear-stained face as the butler opened the drawing-room door to admit a visitor—the man on whose account she had been found fault with. A clever, if rash game, on Agnes's part.

He saw the signs of her trouble and took no apparent heed of them, only anathematised Agnes in his own mind ; and they talked of the dance the night before, and the other places where they had lately met, and what they had seen—or rather he talked, and Honor, confused, abashed, furious with herself for having been taken unawares, answered ' yes ' or ' no ' almost at random, wondering if there would be another battle when Agnes returned and

found the visitor admitted during her absence.

Yet Miss Denne bore herself with all needful courtesy, and, tea appearing, tended to her guest's need of refreshment, with a due appreciation of his masculine requirements in the way of sugar. She had forgotten the hot dried tears on her face, the wildness of her hair, on which Agnes, had she been present, would have looked mild rebuke, when a word of her companion's awoke in her an incredulous amazed surprise.

He had asked her to marry him. Was this her way of escape? the wonder passed through her brain. She never thought of the happiness of either him or herself, but of freedom—the freedom for which she panted and which seemed before her. He

was kind and would care for her ; this was the chief idea which possessed her. The egotism which was the natural result of her life of the last few years, bore its poisonous fruit now.

And it was good of him to like her so much, though why he should do so was a mystery. One did not care for persons simply for their looks, and what more did he know of her to wish always to have her with him? Always with him ; that was the meaning of marriage.

Would she be happier so? Something within her cried out 'No.' She remembered Theo's blush, like the reflection of some new rose-crown on her brow ; she knew Love should be part of this moment that had come to her, but was it? She liked this young man who stood before her, his good-

looking face, fervid and anxious, his eyes eager and troubled, as she stood irresolute. Then there rushed over her a flood of memories, her hatred of her present life, Agnes's wish to be free of her. 'Try me,' said her lover, not without a firm, manly intention, which made his earnestness persuasive, to turn over a new leaf in his life if this girl trusted him, and to give her no reason to repent her choice; 'you don't know how I love you!'

The words spoke of shelter and care and tenderness, and as he said imploringly. 'Will you come?' a sound escaped her lips. She heard it in a dream, and knew she had said, 'Yes.'

His kiss was not a dream; it was a claim of possession from which she instinctively shrunk. As she felt it, she would

have given much to withdraw from her word ; a vague dread of the new unknown world to which she had pledged herself passed like a shadow over her soul ; but the door opened again and her lover turned to tell Agnes, standing on the threshold, that Honor had promised to be his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

The dazzle of the jewels that played round you
Hid the beloved from me.

Then you saw me
With your eye only, and not with your heart.

PICCOLOMINI.

THE next six weeks were like a dream to Honor. She scarcely knew how it was fixed that she was to be married at the end of that time, and if a vague irresolute wish to pause and beware possessed her, it was frustrated scarce consciously to herself. Agnes had taken all arrangements into her own hands and carried them on, with swift, unresting decision.

The girl was not unhappy; her engagement had brought to her the sem-

blance if not the reality of more liberty than she had hitherto enjoyed. Her lover, while he rejoiced in the winning of this beautiful girl, who, to his mind, cut out all the other women he had been in love with, was yet careful not to risk losing her by any such signs of affection as, he soon learned, her instinct hated.

It would all come right when they were married, was his comfortable assurance when he felt Miss Denne shrink from any warmth of greeting or parting. Girls were like that, he supposed, at all events girls of her kind, and he wasn't sure they weren't better so, if you wanted to marry them. He understood Honor's nature no better than she did his, that of *l'homme sensuel moyen*, and in Honor's

case Agnes was careful to prevent her attaining a more intimate knowledge of her future husband than was absolutely necessary. He was rich, good-looking in his own way, straight-featured, well-drilled, and well-dressed, kind and generous, and very much in love—‘*mein Liebchen, was willst du mehr?*’ It was Mrs. Denne’s own part, standing as she did, in the place of a mother to Honor, to acquaint herself as far as was possible with his past life, and in this inquiry several anonymous and unsolicited communications aided her greatly. She showed a proper scorn of such epistles, and, albeit she profited by such hints as they contained, to carry her inquiries into further detail, she felt there was no need to trouble the life of a young girl

like Honor with the facts she had learnt.

They were not very bad ; after all, all young men's lives turned out to be much the same, when you knew anything about them, and of course all this would end with his marriage—indeed, was ended already. If she were satisfied, there was no need Honor should know anything ; and besides, the girl was so self-willed and obstinate that nothing she could say to her could make any difference—Agnes only hoped Honor's husband would be better able to manage her than she had been.

So the last days of Miss Denne's girl life were hurried away in the rush of the season, made yet more exhausting by the posting from shop to shop after that exigency of modern life, the trousseau, and

Honor rose one morning to know that the next day would bring with it her wedding.

For the first time she felt that freedom was yet hers and always had been hers, such freedom as after this day she would never know again. 'Was it too late?' she thought as she stood alone in her old dismal schoolroom, filled with a bitter wonder and surmise as to the new existence the morrow would bring forth, when Agnes rushed in upon her, jealousy and curiosity struggling within her, but only maternal interest audible in her voice.

'Honor, you are wanted everywhere! Rex is here, and Mr. Bridges, with the settlements to be signed, in the library; and Jameson's person has come to see about the alteration in your travelling dress; and

Mr. Clay has brought your diamonds, but you had better settle the other matters first, before you see them.'

This was really a nobly generous suggestion, for Mrs. Denne fully felt how hard it would be for any woman to tear herself away, back to the smaller affairs of life, from the contemplation of those stones. 'Jameson must wait, of course,' she continued, 'and if you run down to them in the library, I will go back to Mr. Clay till you have finished the business. Only be as quick as you can.'

Honor went, as she was bidden, downstairs to the room where her lover and her father's lawyer awaited her. She put her white, slender finger on the parchment, signed and delivered as her act and deed, the writing which protected her against all

pecuniary misdoings on the part of the man to whom she was about to entrust herself and her life, and then turned with a sweet, ignorant laugh at her mock important tone to her lover, as the lawyer folded up the crackling document and wished them all the happiness which he was sure would be theirs from his old knowledge of the bride's parents and from what he had heard both of her and the bridegroom. 'I brought this settlement in person,' he said, turning to the young man, 'because I wished to tell Miss Denne how real a pleasure this business has been to me, both as an old friend of her father's, and, as I hope to prove, of hers also.'

'Thank you,' responded Rex cordially. 'Please count me in too, Mr. Bridges. Well, good-bye. You'll be there to-morrow

to see us turned off?—What is it, Norah? where are you off to now? I haven't seen you yet.'

'There is another old friend upstairs,' said Honor, laughing, as the door closed behind Mr. Bridges and his bag, 'whom I know as little of as I do of Mr. Bridges—Mr. Clay, my mother's trustee, with her diamonds for me.'

'I didn't know you were such a swell as that,' quoth her lover. 'May I come and see them too?'

'If you like; they are in the drawing-room;' and Honor sprang upstairs before him, to where Agnes was seated, in converse with Mr. Clay, a man of about sixty, who turned towards Honor with a keen, interested glance.

'You were a child when I had to take

care of these baubles of yours,' he said, as though he had not expected the slender nymph majesty of the maiden who stood before him. 'They will suit you now as well as they did your mother.'

'I never knew any one diamonds would not suit,' was Agnes's comment, as Mr. Clay, with a touch of mock deference and formality, presented the heavy case and its key to their owner, and Rex, relieving her of them, placed the case on the table for Honor to open.

The revelation of the clustered light within provoked a low 'By Jove!' from the young man, and made Agnes silent. The jewels were beautiful indeed, more to be desired than even in her memory of them. 'Put them on,' said Rex, as Honor lifted out the long dazzle of the *rivière*;

and she would have obeyed him simply, heedless of their effect on her morning dress of unbleached linen and coarse lace, had not the barbarism so horrified Agnes's instinct of dress, as to conquer even her jealousy, for the moment, and make her cry—

‘Oh, no, Honor; not like that, for pity's sake.’

There was a shawl of Mrs. Denne's lying on the sofa—rich old Spanish lace; she draped its dusky cloud about the girl's shoulders, so that the throat gleamed white above it, and then turned to Rex, bidding him fasten on the necklace; but Honor did this office for herself, as Agnes fastened the stars into her hair.

Her future husband surveyed both bride and jewels with critical approba-

tion. 'They beat Nettie Gresham's out-and-out,' he said, Miss Gresham being a lady who appeared nightly in a burlesque of 'Cophetua,' as the beggar maid attired, in her poverty, in grey samite and a wealth of diamonds, which was the admiration of women, and the seal of her charm to men's eyes as being the sign of other men's recognition thereof. Honor had only beheld her once on the stage, and had, girl-like, taken her jewels to be paste; yet the comparison offended some instinct within her, as it affronted Mr. Clay's taste. 'What does the fellow mean by comparing this child's diamonds to that woman's?' he thought. It was only Agnes who responded to the remark.

'Do you think so really? There was a big spider Nettie Gresham wore the

other night—diamonds, with a huge opal for the body. Oh, it was too lovely!’

‘How hideous!’ said Honor, with a slight movement of disgust. Mr. Clay thought how her words held more truth than she knew. He happened to know something of that spider and its hideousness: how heavy a price it had cost—a man’s honour, a wife’s betrayal; two lives shattered, and a misery of which it was not easy to forecast the end. ‘How can women wear such ugly things!’ Honor added, striving to loosen her own shining fetter, with something like impatience.

‘Because they like them,’ rejoined Rex. ‘I don’t suppose they would care if diamonds were set like a gallows, as long as they were diamonds. You don’t seem to care much about yours, though,’ he

concluded, as Honor, succeeding in her endeavour, loosened the necklace from her throat. He admired the indifference she had shown, albeit he scarce believed in it. It was out of nature for a girl to be really unmoved by the possession of such stones as these, but it was very good form to appear so.

Agnes knew that Honor's carelessness was real, and it irritated her. She felt how differently she would have appreciated the jewels, and Miss Denne's lack of delight in them seemed to the elder woman to show a want in her character. As for Mr. Clay, Honor's manner at once amused him and quickened his interest in her. He had known the first Mrs. Denne well, and in the girl's royal indifference to the diamonds he discerned the promise of a like woman-

liness to that of her mother. 'Only,' he thought, 'Mrs. Denne was fond of them, because they pleased her husband; why hasn't her daughter the same feeling?'

He wished he could have spoken to her, could have asked her if she were really as well content as she seemed. He knew her future husband was a good fellow in many ways, even if he had sown his wild oats, but what was there in him to make a girl like this one fall in love with him? Was she marrying him for money? Surely not; she would have enough of her own, despite her father's second marriage, and its result in that white-frocked young gentleman whom Mr. Clay had that morning met at the front door, escorted by nurse and nursemaid, and being wheeled down the steps for his morning airing, in

that doubly dangerous abomination, a perambulator.

Had her step-mother talked her into it? No, the present Mrs. Denne was too dear a little woman for that. Well, the girl must know her own mind best; it was no business of his, and she would have the right to resent any inquiry or warning of his as an impertinence. Still, through the day, again and again, there came back to him the memory of Honor Denne, as she stood in the morning sunlight, the diamonds crowning her hair, and defining the proud curve of the neck, where it upreared itself from the shoulder. He recalled the beauty of her eyes, outshining the jewels, and her unconscious stateliness, which rather lent to the light of stones than borrowed aught of dignity from them.

Then, as he recollected the look of the man she was about to marry bent upon her, the dread for her again possessed the old man. Does she understand what she is doing?' he thought, as he recollected her frank ease with her future husband—her absolute want of the lovely shyness which overlies a girl's entire trust in her lover, as the mist of the veil clings over her on her marriage day.

It might be all right, but when, the next morning, Mr. Clay watched her coming up the church aisle, in her whiteness of attire, the diamonds fastening her hair and clasping her throat, he noted the same absence of depth in her expression, either for happiness or unhappiness; there was no fear, but also no expectancy in its unawed tranquillity. He chid himself as

a romantic old fool, who should have known better at his age than to indulge in such fancies. How the deuce would he have the girl look ?

‘What have you done with your diamonds?’ he asked the bride, laughing, when, after the breakfast, she came down into the drawing-room in her travelling dress. ‘Shall I take charge of them for you again, till your return from abroad?’

‘They are to be sent to the bankers’, I believe,’ she said. ‘Mamma and Rex made more fuss about their being taken care of than I should have thought of.’

‘But it is to you they are most important,’ rejoined Mr. Clay. ‘If you and your husband quarrelled——’ and then he wondered what on earth made him start such

an ill-omened jest on a wedding day. ‘I mean,’ he continued, ‘I don’t know what control he may have over your property, but the jewels are yours and yours only, to do what you like with.’

She looked perfectly indifferent to this announcement, and at that moment her husband came up to them.

‘Come, Norah, young woman, or we shall miss the train.—She looked well in her finery, didn’t she?’ he said to Mr. Clay. His tone struck the elder man; it seemed to mark out Honor so entirely as his personal property, of which he had the right to be proud; which should be held dearly and taken care of, but always and only for his good use and pleasure. Did some kindred sense of this strike the girl? Mr. Clay wondered. She looked up at her

husband as though some new foreboding cast its shadow over her eyes.

‘Good-bye, darling child,’ murmured Agnes, clinging closely to Honor: ‘I am off to Scotland the day after to-morrow, for I shan’t be able to bear the house without you. We shan’t meet for some time, but you must write very often and come down to Sheldon as soon as you come back, I shall want you so; only I know you are happy, and that is all I wish.’

‘She is only a cold, heartless girl,’ thought Mr. Clay, as he saw Honor’s formal return of Mrs. Denne’s kisses, even though Agnes’s blue eyes were brimming over with tears, and her lips were tremulous with emotion in which she herself believed. ‘That is the mystery of this wonderful history.’

But just then there emerged from the dining-room Lionel, Honor's little half-brother, with the starched and snowy splendour of his wedding garment sadly marred by 'a rain and ruin' of strawberry stains, and holding a huge block of almond icing in either hand.

'Say good-bye to Norah,' bade his mother. 'Oh, but take care, dearest,' to Honor, 'he'll ruin your gown.'

But heedless of the warning, or of the stickiness of the child's embrace, Honor had knelt down on the floor and put both her arms closely round him. They were in the hall, with the carriage at the door, and most of the guests in the drawing-room above had crowded into the balcony to watch the departure.

'I wis you weren't doin',' said Master

Lionel—‘no one will finis mine scap-
boot.’

‘I will, when I come back,’ his sister answered. ‘Baby, are you sorry Norah is going away?’ the words were very low; none could hear them but the child himself. ‘Do you love her a little?’

‘Yes, I loves her werry much: a thousand pouns.’

Her lips clung closely to the child's for the careless words which seemed to her sad passionate soul the one benediction and farewell of her wedding day; and Mr. Clay, who saw how tightly her mouth was compressed, how wide were her eyes in the effort to keep back tears, no longer thought her cold.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I know not what it says—
Some word in some strange language that my ears
Have never heard.—DIPSYCHUS.

A FEW days later, a girl was standing by the window of a sitting-room in a Paris hotel, a wild hopeless pain in her eyes and face, which looked as though numb to outward impressions. Indeed, Honor felt as if all life were far away from her, and she had nothing to do therewith; the world was only a confused jangle of noises and glare of faces and scenes. How long ago was it since she, Honor Denne, had stood white-robed and veiled, looking forward with little hope, but also with little fear, to the new

existence, than which death now seemed less strange and terrible.

She did not love her husband. The full sense of all that meant and must mean, to the end of her life, crushed her with the shock of a horror utterly unknown, unexpected, till now when it faced her as a truth whereof the aspect, hour by hour and day by day, grew more horrible. Sometimes the fancy would come to her that it was all a dream, that she would wake to find herself Honor Denne free again, with her fate still her own, and then the experience would come back to her with double force.

No, never again! She was her husband's wife, bound to his side, although his very voice, his step as he came up the stairs, his presence in the room, seemed likely to drive her mad. Was it his fault

or hers? She did not know; she was blind and bewildered, and the stunned, aching feeling that she would never be her own again, that her liberty was lost for ever, would end in a passionate revulsion and struggle within her heart, a longing for freedom, which seemed at times to kindle her repulsion to her husband to fierce, actual hatred.

It found little outward expression—this tumult within her—except in a listless dullness, for which her husband was at a loss to account. He was puzzled whether this want of interest in everything showed shyness or sullenness; and, as it was not dispelled by caresses or trinkets, he inclined to ascribe it to the latter quality. He could not understand the brooding depths of his wife's eyes; but they made

him uneasy ; and he wondered if, after all, his marriage had been a mistake. There was no doubt of Honor's beauty ; not even the fact it was now his own possession depreciated its value in his eyes ; but if a man's wife were to be silent and sulky—or what looked like it—answering ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ as if she were speaking in her sleep, and doing what he told her in the same fashion, it would soon be enough to make him shoot her or himself.

Yet he could not complain. If she were really sullen, her silence and that set look on her face were the only signs of it. She did all he wished, and this puzzled her husband the most in her. It was as though she had no wishes of her own, as if wherever they went or whatever they did were one to her. It might be the sweet sub-

missiveness of a bride certainly ; but Rex found it intolerable.

Part of Honor's attraction for him at first had been his instinct of her strong will, which it would be pleasant for him at once to gratify and subdue to his own ; but of this will his wife showed no token. Cold, passive, indifferent : it was thus she appeared, this wretched, untamed girl, in her lonely silence of pain, which none other could know and she herself scarce understood.

It was hard on the young man, and he felt it to be so ; as he also realised yet once more that there was no making out women. He cared for Honor in his own way, and would have been glad to make her happy had he known how to set about it, for both their sakes ; for a worse wet blanket to a fellow's temper and spirits, than his wife

had proved during these four long and weary days of their stay in Paris, couldn't be found. Yet what the devil was he to do? When a woman had all she could want, as Honor had, or might have at present, how was he to enter into her whims? One thing he knew, which was that if these were her ways, they were d——d unpleasant ones; and he wished she had shown him them earlier in the day.

Still he would not give in; and in his persistent cheerfulness and good temper, in the hope that she might come round, he showed perhaps little tact, but more self-restraint and kindness than Honor ever realised. So they dragged about Paris, through the usual monotonous honeymoon routine, dining and playgoing; now and then coming across other brides and bride-

grooms, who looked at them sympathetically, as partakers in their happiness.

The second evening their table at dinner was next to that of a young English couple, gay with that foolish, pleasant gladness which reminds soberer people of two children playing at being grown-up. As this other girl's joyous laugh struck Honor's ear, the latter's desolate, questioning eyes turned in wonder towards the happy countenance with its smile of sweet content. Was she all alone, she thought, in her experience? She remembered Theo's face, that day long ago, with a like expression to that of this bride near her. They were happy, while she—oh, this mistake, had it robbed her irretrievably—an instant surmise flashed through her—not only of her freedom and gladness, but

of a possible happiness she could never now hope to know! Would love, such as people wrote and spoke about, have made everything different? No—with a quick shudder—she hated love; she never wished to hear the word again.

This fifth evening after her wedding, she was standing, as it grew dusk, staring as in a dull stupor, out on the parched lime trees, the white pavement, the tall houses opposite the soft sky, with its rosy trails of flushed cloudlets; when her husband dashed into the room, an excitement in his face, at a prospect of relief from their worse than monotonous *tête-à-tête*.

‘I say, Norah, I’ve just met a man I know, George Hatton, such a nice fellow! I hope you won’t mind, but I’ve asked him to dinner. If I’d only known he was here

before, I would have booked three seats for the Gymnase to-night and made him go along with us.'

'Can't you and he go together?' said Honor, a sudden interest in her tone, born of her relief at the idea of an evening all alone.

'And leave you here all alone? No, by Jove! Hatton would think me worse than an infidel.'

'I wish you would,' she urged; 'I have a bad headache, and the play is sure to make it worse.'

It was no fiction, her headache, and so her face bore witness to her husband's eyes.

'Poor girl!' he said, putting his arm round her and kissing her. 'If you are sure you'd rather not go, I will bring you back here after dinner, and Hatton and I

will just look in at the show for half an hour.' The prospect of freedom and change for a little while was no less welcome to him than to Honor. 'Are you well enough to come out to dinner? I want you to see Hatton.'—His tone meant 'I want Hatton to see you.'

'Yes, quite. Shall I put on my bonnet?'

'The one with the wheat-ears, that I like. It's a confounded bore for you, this headache! never mind, some Boy will set it to rights.'

It did after a fashion; her husband's belief in his prescription was confirmed, when he saw at dinner that after two glasses thereof his wife's heavy eyes had brightened, and her cheeks were slightly flushed. He could read the admiration of her beauty in Hatton's gaze.

‘Not the sort of girl, though, I should have thought he would marry,’ was their guest’s reflection. ‘She doesn’t seem to have anything to say, though I should think she had a temper of her own. Handsome enough to make any man mad! It’s odd, though, her letting him leave her alone before they have been a week married.’

None the less, Mr. Hatton made all suitable acknowledgment to the young wife of her kindness to him, in granting her husband leave of absence, as they stood together in the vestibule of the hotel, the two men having escorted Honor back there, before going on to the theatre.

‘Good-bye, my girl,’ Rex said, kissing her. ‘Take care of yourself, and be all right when I come back.’

‘We’ll walk to the shop, Hatton, if you don’t mind,’ he continued, as he and his friend stepped out again into the summer evening; and, his companion assenting, he struck a light, kindled his own cigarette, and proffered it to Hatton. Honor’s bridegroom was one of those men who never are able to embark on any confidence, or any discussion of importance, unless supported by tobacco. ‘I’m deuced glad to have met you, old boy,’ he said, after a pause. ‘I’m in a d——d fix, and you are nearly the only fellow I could have mentioned it to, as you know all about it.’

Hatton had a pretty clear idea of what his friend was driving at. To-night’s was by no means the first little dinner at which Rex had been host, and Hatton had made

the third. Truth to tell, during this evening he had often remembered the joviality of these past entertainments, as compared with the dreariness of the present meal ; so he answered—

‘ Anything to do with the past business ? I thought you told me you had put an end to it all and squared matters with that woman ? ’

‘ Squared matters ? So I did, damn her ! and pretty heavily too, when I all but knew how she had been going on with Dalrymple, behind my back. However, I settled more on her than she had any right to expect ; she made a confounded fuss about it, but I broke off the whole affair the day after I was engaged to Norah—and as Addie knew it was no go and I’d made

up my mind, she grabbed the money and was quiet, and a fortnight after, I saw her in the park with Dalrymple.'

'Well?'

'Well, I thought it was all straight, and put the whole affair out of my head, when to-day I get a letter. It seems Dalrymple is broke, and so she wants to come on me. Threatens to tell my wife and I don't know what else, the cat! Where's the letter? Hang it! I must have left it at home, in my other pocket; I hope Norah won't get hold of it, that's all.'

'I'd let her alone,' was Hatton's brief and pregnant counsel when his friend questioned him as to what he had better do, in regard to the obnoxious missive; and Rex receiving his advice in gloomy silence,

the two walked on together and turned into the theatre, without more being said.

Meanwhile, Honor had climbed up the hotel staircase to her rooms, as though she were mounting to a prison. Her husband's name for her rang in her ears. 'His girl!'—oh, she loathed the words!—*his*, no longer her own.

The weight of her whole future pressed upon her then, not as it would come in reality, hour by hour and day by day, but with the burden of all its years crushing her, as beneath an unendurable load. She seldom took wine, and the champagne to-night had strangely excited her. She walked up and down the sitting-room, like some wild bright-eyed desperate animal, till at last the words broke from

her: 'I can't bear it! I can't! What can I do?'

Her own face, as she met it in the glass, cast back on her her sense of shame. Then a thought overpowered her, making her breath come quick with its intensity; she stood as fixed to the spot, one idea taking definite form in her mind in one word—escape.

She was free for the next two hours; before her husband returned she might be far from him, out of his power. Would he follow her, fetch her back? He should not! The defiance seemed to change the fancy into a feasibility, though for a minute she stopped, startled, irresolute, frightened at herself.

Then, as if she wished to seal her decision, she turned into the bedroom and

began mechanically and hastily to pack her travelling bag. She was glad now she had had her own way in not bringing a maid with her to Paris. Had she enough money? She looked in her purse and found an English ten-pound note and some gold—yes, that would do.

She changed her smart bonnet for a small travelling hat, and shrouded her summer dress with a long soft black mantle, under which she could carry her bag unobserved, and then she lingered for a moment, not as repenting this step she had determined on, or as realising its full import, only with a hesitation she herself could not have defined. An impulse as unchecked as her leading towards flight had been, made her write a note, neither

defence, nor plea, nor explanation, only these few words:

‘I am very unhappy. It is all my fault, but I can’t stay. Good-bye.’

She turned and left the room, and walked quickly along the corridor and down the wide staircase. In the vestibule there were only the clerk and hall porter and two waiters. They did not notice her particularly, and, supposing her husband to be smoking in the balcony of their sitting-room, only put her down as an Englishwoman in whom the eccentricities of her nation were carried to the extent of solitary evening rambles. Certainly the two waiters did comment to each other on the husband’s want of gallantry in not escorting so charming a young wife.


‘Think you they have quarrelled?’
asked Jean of François.

The latter shrugged his shoulders. ‘He is complaisant truly, that husband!’ was all his remark.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

G & C

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